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Bass Magazine

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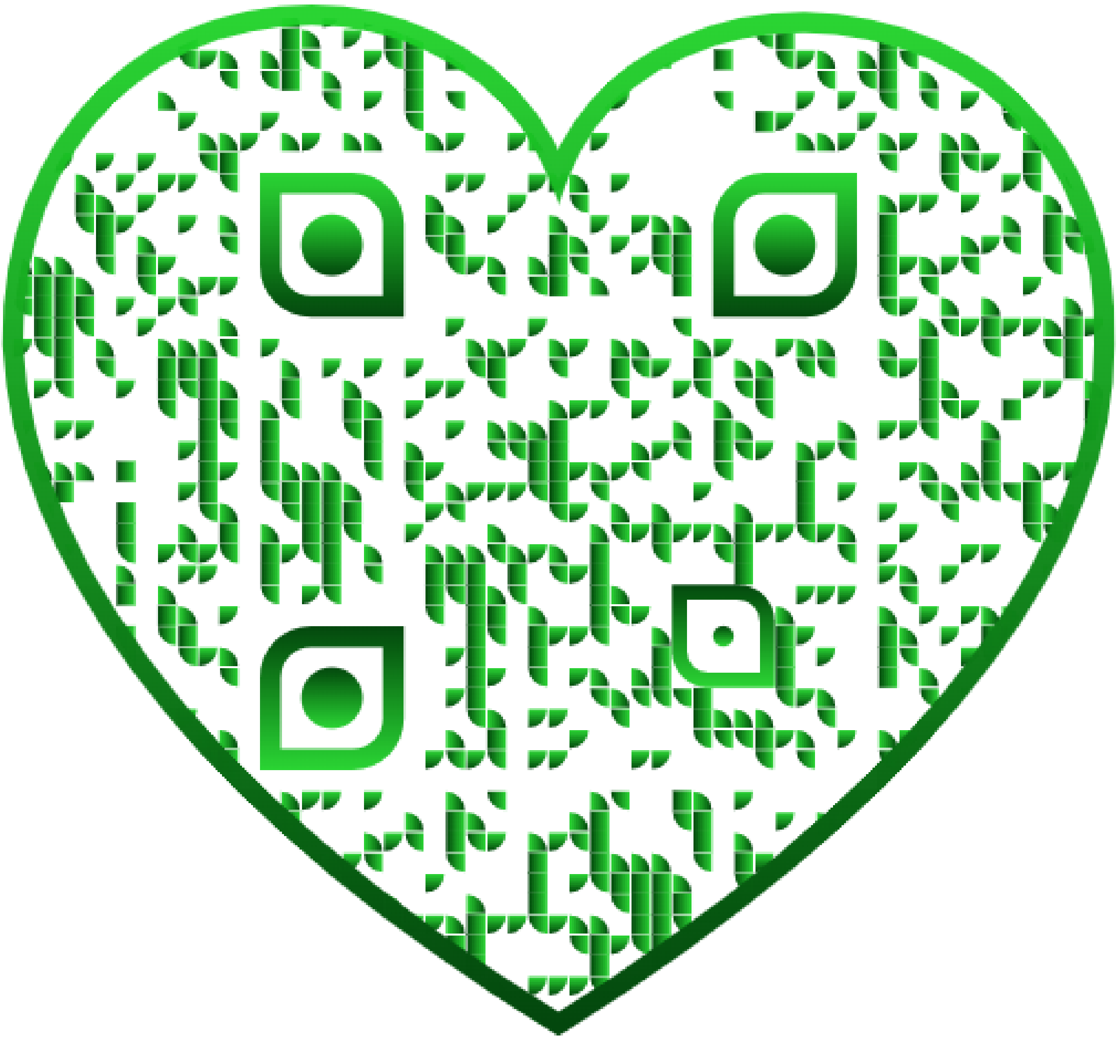

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Welcome! We enter 2019 with a renewed mission and a definite sense of excitement for what the new year will bring in bass world. As you read this, we're preparing to hit the annual Winter NAMM Show in California, where we hear there are plenty of essential innovations in the low-frequency zone; while we're writing up our report for the March magazine, enjoy this features-stuffed issue, our most value-packed in quite some time.

We're delighted to have finally placed the great Rudy Sarzo, a veteran of no fewer than six successive decades in bass playing, where he belongs – on our cover. A man who has played with a series of huge names, witnessing mighty triumphs and tragedies along the way, Rudy has tons of wisdom to impart to all bassists. He's joined in this issue by Divinity Roxx, a true force of nature; arena-rockers Eric Kertes (Shania Twain) and Richard Jones (Stereophonics); the great Geezer Butler (Black Sabbath); soul and rock legend Randy Hope-Taylor (Incognito, Jeff Beck); and a host of other miraculously talented bass players.

Elsewhere, we review a range of tasty gear, all the way from a £149 compressor from Pigtronix to a Fodera that will cost you three grand and more. We bring you our expert team of bass tutors, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann and Stu Clayton, whose combined aim is to make you the bassist you've always wanted to be. Finally, I'm absolutely delighted to announce an essential new techniques column from Stuart Hamm, a giant in our world, who will take you to places where none of us thought bass could go. Enjoy this issue, and I'll see you in March!

Joel McIver, Editor

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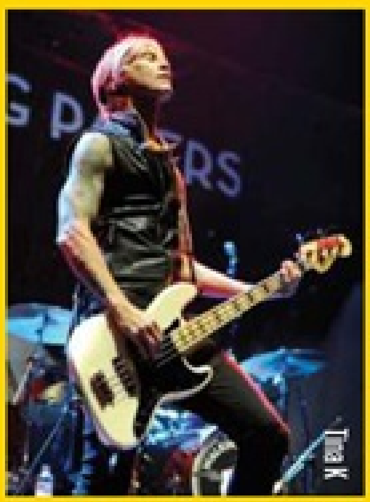
THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds



Tina K

DUFF NOTES

Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan has announced a solo album for 2019. Recorded with producer Shooter Jennings in Echo Park, California, the album was laid down between McKagan's ongoing tour commitments with his day-job band, currently playing stadiums as part of their *Not In This Lifetime* reunion tour. It's inspired, says McKagan, by the unstable state of the world we currently inhabit. "I wrote a couple of articles about historical places I passed through on this last tour, and people kept asking if that was going to be the focus of my next book," says the great man. "But an unseen and irrepressible force guided me to write little vignettes of reflective prose… little instant reactions. The heartbreak, anger, fear, confusion and divide I have experienced over the last two and a half years of travelling this globe of ours coerced these words into songs that tell my truth, and one that I hope will spread and help us all. I do this for my daughters… I do this for my love of where I grew up… I do this, because I truly feel it must be done and said right now."

www.facebook.com/duffmckagan

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain

Manton Customs Ascendant £1,595

https://tinyurl.com/ybwzsaow

Up this month, low-enders, we have the remarkable Manton Customs Ascendant six-string. This sleek and sophisticated machine comprises a wonderfully offset, carved yew and walnut body with a three-piece walnut/wenge neck. The slimline form isn't merely aesthetically pleasing, it's also lightweight and offers "perfect balance" according to Manton. With the addition of yew binding and a wenge fingerboard, this is a bass to be reckoned with. It sports a Delano Xtender pickup, which boasts great clarity and sustain. On the hardware front, it packs an ABM bridge, which features adjustable string spacing to help achieve your ideal setup.

LOW-FREQUENCY LEARNING

A new column in which a bass player shares their playing philosophy

First and foremost the bass content has to be 'musical'. Bass players are not there just to provide a certain frequency. A lot of the melodic content of our songs is provided by the bass. I try and create bass-lines that are hummable. Technique alone is not enough. There are bassists who have jaw-dropping technique that's not always matched by musicality and feel. Slap bass is anathema to me and I don't listen to music that embodies that style of playing. No doubt there are some very skilful exponents of it but I'm happy to leave them to it. Knowledge can be a wonderful thing but 'paralysis by analysis' isn't. The most talented creative people are largely self-taught and self-motivated. It comes from within.

Drew Dempster, New England
www.newengland-prog.com

LONDON CALLING

Visitors to the annual London Bass Guitar Show, which has been taking place at the Olympia venue in Kensington since time immemorial (say 2008), will be aware that it's the ultimate destination for any bass-lover. Hang on before you book a flight though, because we've moved it to September for 2019, co-locating it with Future Publishing's existing UK Guitar Show. The LBGS will still be its own, bass-specific show across two days, with world-class artists, features and educational opportunities, and it will still be in association with *Bass Guitar Magazine* – so we'll see you there! Keep an eye on our social media for dates and location.

www.facebook.com/londonbassguitarshow, @bassguitarshow

THE LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW 2019

GREAT ACOUSTICS

Acoustic Amplifiers have announced new C-Series B300C and B600C bass combos, Class-D units that deliver 300 and 600 watts respectively. The B300C features a 15" ferrite speaker paired with a piezo horn tweeter, while the B600C has two custom-voiced 10" ferrites along with the tweeter. Both can be used to drive additional external cabinets or as a tilt-back wedge for monitoring. EQ-wise, the B300C offers a five-band EQ, a Shape switch with a variable notch filter to dial in midrange tones, and a Blendable Overdrive circuit that allows the player to mix clean and overdriven sounds. The B600C has the same features but with a six-band graphic EQ plus Hi and Low EQ controls. Switchable compression, Super-Hi and Super-Low EQ boosts and a direct XLR output are featured too. Nab them Stateside for $449.99 and $549.99.
http://acousticamplification.com

'BERG MEISTERS

New Super-light Sandbergs are on the way, which is good news for bassists with dodgy backs (like us). The active TT or TM-branded four- or five-strings weigh in at only three kilos (6.6 lbs) thanks to cedar bodies and aluminium hardware; Black Label pickups provide the big sounds. You can bag them for £1475/£1599 (TT four and five) or £1495/£1625 (TM four and five). Your chiropractor will thank you.
www.sandberg-guitars.de, www.synergydistribution.co.uk

CHEERS EARS

Bassist Yerko Sepulveda is running a KickStarter campaign for the BackBeat, a wearable subwoofer that you attach to your strap in order to 'feel' the notes that you play. You can also attach headphones if you want to hear the notes, but the main benefit of the gizmo is that it makes your sounds tactile, as well as giving you a nice back massage (that last bit is pure speculation on our part). Victor Wooten likes it, so why not investigate further?
https://getbackbeat.com

BROOKSY ON BASS

With apps for everything, it would seem, your mobile phone is your sidekick as a musician. Yet one feature that many musicians fail to use is the voice recorder, especially regarding recording gigs and performances. You can obviously spend money on dedicated devices, which generally provide better audio quality if you use an external mic – but if you're just starting out, or if you need to analyse your playing in a live context, recording yourself is very worthwhile. Not only can you hear how you're locking in with a drummer, you can also listen back to your ability to create a groove, making a band flow, lick accuracy and phrasing.

Hot Tip: Use your audio files as a platform to work from and improve your playing. They're also very useful for building a library of gig recordings when you dep with different bands; you can use them for future reference.

THE WOODSHED

Ace luthier Rob Elrick goes from hero to zero… zero fret, that is

The round, the zero, the symbol of null and void, the absence of matter, the presence of nothing… Unlike the abstract concepts of zero which characterise it as nothingness, the zero fret is very real, its concept far from metaphysical. But does the zero fret offer an improvement over that of a conventional nut?

The zero fret is an element of guitar construction that found itself lost in time for nearly a generation. In an effort to achieve tonal characteristics similar to fretted notes while playing open strings, tone-questers of the 70s and 80s had brass nuts fitted to their instruments. Meanwhile, a simple, more elegant, solution was hiding in plain sight. Commonly found on low-priced factory and department store guitars of the 60s, the zero fret had developed a bad rap. It had become a negative indicator of quality, inadvertently incriminating any instrument that sported one. In the 1970s it had become eschewed by much of the industry, falling largely into disuse.

Since a zero fret is not something easily retrofitted onto most existing instruments, it wasn't really a practical solution for the aforementioned tone-seekers – but for the next generation of builders, it became a feature that was both a blast from the past and a logical step into the present.

My first prototype instruments used a conventional nut and, in the style of the time, they were brass. Many brands offering a brass nut promoted them as a value added feature, and with good reason, because fabricating them is a pain in the ass. It was fortuitous that at my first public show, in 1993, I was introduced to a builder named Nick Tung. Nick was a fellow who seemed to have as strong a focus on what he was planning to do next as what he had just done yesterday. To that end, he had incorporated a lot of forward-thinking concepts into his instruments, as well as one that looked conspicuously backward.

Nick was using a zero fret. It was a great curiosity to me, and I'm sure to many others at that time, that a builder of high-end basses had included this hallmark of the low end. Having undoubtedly explained its advantages innumerable times, Nick offered a stupefyingly simple explanation. I was immediately convinced that this was, with little doubt, the smartest feature we were all too dumb to appreciate.

Depending on how you go about it, building a guitar can be a lot of work. Once one starts looking finished, it's likely you're more than ready for it to be done, but final set-up requires precision-cutting of a nut. This is a lot more work than one might imagine, especially if the nut is brass. And if you screw one up, well, that's even more work. Now let's suppose you've got to make six, eight or 10 at one time. I don't even like thinking about it!

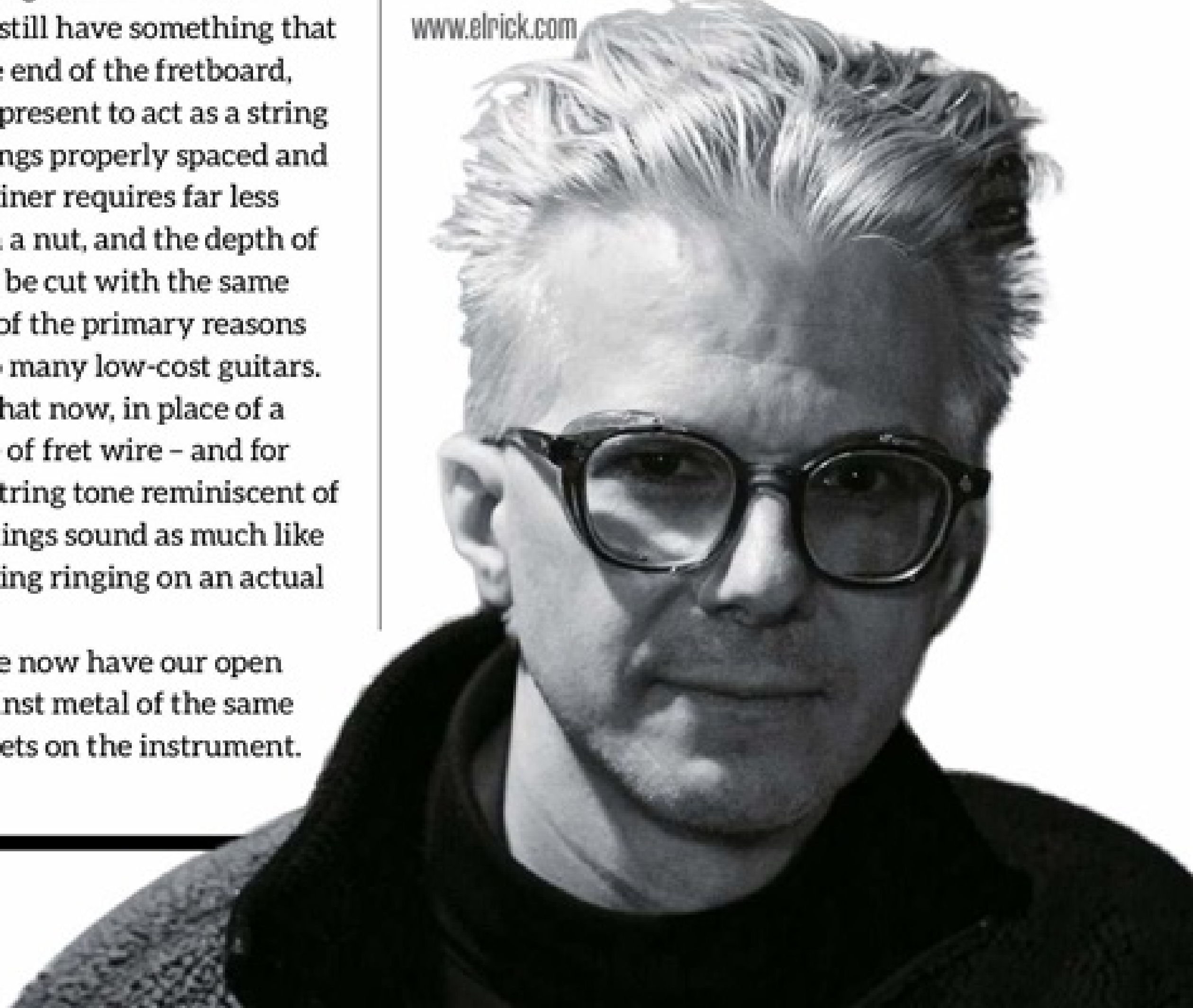
Fortunately, I no longer have to. When using a zero fret you still have something that looks like a nut at the end of the fretboard, but this "nut" is only present to act as a string retainer, keeping strings properly spaced and aligned. A string retainer requires far less skill to fabricate than a nut, and the depth of its slots don't need to be cut with the same precision; this is one of the primary reasons they were used on so many low-cost guitars. The other benefit is that now, in place of a nut, you have a piece of fret wire – and for those seeking open-string tone reminiscent of a fretted note, few things sound as much like a fretted note as a string ringing on an actual piece of fret wire.

With a zero fret we now have our open strings vibrating against metal of the same composition as the frets on the instrument. We also now have a comfortable and consistent string height in first position because we are able to use the same size fret wire that's installed on the rest of the neck. As an added convenience, fret wire comes in a variety of sizes so, if a player likes to really lay into their open strings, we have the option of selecting a taller piece of wire. Fret wire is also less costly and wears better than most materials commonly used for a nut and, if need be, it is simpler to replace, making it a more serviceable component.

So there you have it. The next time some local illuminatus tries to blow your mind by philosophising upon the concept of zero, you can tell them that they're simply contemplating zero from the wrong perspective.

> "I WAS CONVINCED THAT A ZERO FRET WAS THE SMARTEST FEATURE WE WERE TOO DUMB TO APPRECIATE… WE NOW HAVE OUR OPEN STRINGS VIBRATING AGAINST METAL"

www.elrick.com



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BASS ALBUMS

Mike Brooks celebrates *Sgt Pepper's*: the album that changed everything

The most iconic rock album ever made? Quite possibly – and one with a suitably chaotic genesis…

By August 1966, following a problematic tour to support that year's album *Revolver*, Paul McCartney (vocals, bass), John Lennon (vocals, guitars), George Harrison (guitars) and Ringo Starr (drums) had decided to cease live touring. Acknowledging that their band format limited the reproduction of their ambitious album recordings in a live setting, after a three-month break the Beatles set about preparing their eighth album, soon to become the masterpiece known as *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Released in 1967, the album trailblazed its way around the world, drawing together elements of pop, rock, psychedelia, fashion, art and design in a way that no other group had done before. It also signalled a change in the Beatles' dynamic, with their discovery of LSD leading to individual spiritual awakenings. McCartney, ever the pragmatist and workaholic, took the reins when it came to many of the song ideas and arrangements.

Under the guidance of producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick, the album also introduced a raft of new recording techniques and sounds that opened many musicians' eyes to what could be achieved in the recording studio. The public responded with enthusiasm; at the end of May '67, the album shifted 250,000 copies in the UK in its first week of release and went on to spend 23 consecutive weeks at number one in the UK album charts. It also remained for 15 weeks at number one in the US, where it won six honours at the 1968 Grammy Awards. The album sold over 2.5 million units worldwide in its first three months, and as of last year that figure has exceeded 32 million copies.

For the album sessions, McCartney used a Rickenbacker 4001S bass strung with either Rotosound or Pyramid strings and amplified it through a Vox UL4120 amp, as well as a 1964 Fender Bassman and a 2x12 cabinet, although this album introduced the concept of DI-ing straight into the mixing desk for a cleaner, more precise bass tone. Stereo separation of instruments was a big deal on this album, so it's no surprise to learn that over 700 hours were spent writing, recording and mixing.

By this point in his career, McCartney was pushing the envelope for bass players the world over. The title track is a fine example of his supportive and rounded bass work, while the opening verse of 'With A Little Help From My Friends' is quintessential Macca. His high-register descending line offers a nice contrast from the lower octave work in the chorus, and doesn't get in the way of Ringo's vocal phrasing. Indeed, the bass shows the most movement in the song against the straight guitar chords. The same goes for 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', where McCartney hints at his interest in various classical composers, especially in the verses.

On 'Getting Better', McCartney's fluid bass is at the forefront, pushing the song along with his trademark walking style. 'When I'm Sixty Four' is famously steeped in British music-hall imagery and performance, with McCartney's bass-line underpinning the whole song. His part for 'Lovely Rita' barely pauses for breath throughout, the section from 2'11" through to 2'36" adding a dynamic change with staccato phrases.

A one-page celebration of this album can only hope to scratch its surface, but if our aim is to salute its amazing bass-playing, look no further than the very end of the LP, where the outro of 'A Day In The Life' – a full orchestra ascending a hysterical, apocalyptic scale – is based on a single, repeated bass guitar note. This is a bassist with taste.

Getty

> "MCCARTNEY'S FLUID BASS IS AT THE FOREFRONT, PUSHING THE SONG ALONG WITH HIS TRADEMARK WALKING STYLE"

NO TREBLE

Kevin Johnson updates us from the NT forum

In the electric bass world, it seems like brand new designs are becoming few and far between. Sure, the modern multi-scale, single-cut adorned with exotic top woods is a far cry from Leo's old Precision, but even that boutique style is becoming more common. That's why No Treble readers were curious to check out our recent Bass Of The Week column on the Nordic Guitars Rotator. A preliminary check would have you think it's just a two-necked instrument – one fretted and one fretless – but the name gives away its biggest secret: they rotate.

"The necks are fastened to each other exactly in the middle, with a pivot system connected to the back part," the company explains. This allows the necks to spin in front of you, switching between fretted and fretless in an instant. While that's nifty in and of itself, builder Bjørn Rønnow explains and then demos how the two necks can be used for extended techniques to fill out your solo grooves. Whether or not the Rotator gets traction with most players is less important than the spirit of innovation Rønnow brings to our humble instrument. Check out Nordic Guitars online for samples.

Changing gears, bassist Lorin Cohen's latest Notes From The Bandstand article brought up some good points about bass solos. Cohen, a seasoned New York City bassist, shared his thoughts on five impactful approaches to soloing: pentatonics, groove, dialogue with the drummer, call and response in different registers, and funky stuff.

"As a non-fretted instrument, one thing we can do that, in most settings, no other instrument on the bandstand can, is to use effects such as slides and glissandos to create interest," he writes. "Finishing a line with a slide or glissando can add a funky component to our solos that only we as bass players can achieve… With all this, we can never forget that the goal of the jazz solo is to communicate and connect. Sure, play all the fancy stuff. But if you aren't reaching out and grabbing hold of someone's heart, there's no point."

Other hits on No Treble this month included new music from Vulfpeck, the limited edition Fender Midnight Hour Precision bass, and a great lesson from Damian Erskine to help you unlock the fretboard. Until next time, keep grooving!

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

Does gear matter, asks Basschat moderator Silvia Bluejay

How important is our gear, as opposed to technique and practice? Is the seemingly never-ending quest for 'that' bass sound just a waste of time? Or does it perhaps help to keep our interest and curiosity alive? Does it make a difference if the new toy is expensive or cheap, brand new or second-hand?

For some, the answer is obvious – learn to play properly, and any equipment will sound great. (The classic 'it's all in the fingers' statement!) Learn to set up and use your gear to its best for your needs, and you won't have to buy new items every month out of frustration. Save the money, spend the time on practising instead, and you win twice.

That's all well and good, but this is Basschat! Most of us believe gear does matter, but only in a highly personal, subjective way. Forget about your new toy making a substantial difference to your band's sound; more importantly, forget about it being noticed by the audience. It's all for your own enjoyment – if your amp/cab pairing sounds divine to your ears and your bass feels like it plays itself, you'll want to spend more time with them, and perhaps try new techniques. That will benefit your band and audiences too.

Our gear doesn't have to be expensive to make us happy. Unlike in the bad old days, there are no truly terrible instruments or amps on the market nowadays. Expensive gear is, however, usually more reliable, and therefore preferable if we gig a lot: what better excuse to scour our Marketplace to find high-quality stuff at affordable prices? Our GAS champion Al Krow once again speaks Basschat's truth: if we spend our hard-earned spare cash on something, it might as well be something we love doing or having. Fellow gearhead KingPrawn promises to continue spending money on stuff that immediately makes him want other stuff. We're part of the cycle whereby one Basschatter's unwanted kit can become another's prized possession.

While for some it's all about sound and look, others crave the comfort of lightweight equipment, or the convenience of well-designed ergonomics that don't leave us baffled when setting up. If we keep the cycle going for long enough, will we all end up with exactly what we want, thereby putting an end to GAS? Don't hold your breath.

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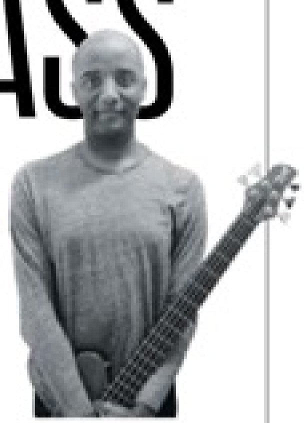

S. Marshall Perry brings us the Talkbass news

As I read a TalkBass thread about the best cab for small clubs, I found myself wondering how many 'Best' threads exist. How much space has been filled with attempts to find the best thing for a particular job? Then I think of the time I have spent on finding the best amp, best bass, and best excuse for buying them. I'm not sure I could justify all the gear I have owned, but ultimately rejected in my search for the best.

FOBO, the acronym for 'fear of better options', has entered the popular lexicon as a source of indecision, unhappiness, and perfectionism. Is this what inspires all the 'Best' threads and propels my carousel of gear? I don't think it's driven by a fear of something better existing. As noted in many threads, what is best is subjective, as indicated by the diversity of the gear favoured by those professionals and hobbyists that can afford any option.

For me, it was CTSIMH, or 'chasing that sound in my head'. The acronym needs work, but it suggests dissatisfaction or a lack of acceptance with one's sound. Like FOBO, it promotes indecision and perfectionism. Unlike FOBO, unhappiness is not just an outcome, but also a cause. Another recent thread was entitled, "That perfect sound is elusive." It started as a discussion about how to rig sound differently at gigs than at home or in the store. Quickly, however, posters warned about CTSIMH: the futility of seeking a perfect sound.

Some people enjoy the chase, but I'd bet that most want to settle on a rig, play, and develop. When I buy a piece of gear, I try to keep it for at least a month. Other than giving my ears some time, this gives me some time to learn how to use it. I also acknowledge the primary component of a sound: me. Since I can be a harsh self-critic, it's useful to get feedback from others, and listen to recordings while pretending it's someone else playing bass. Practising self-acceptance while seeing myself as a work in progress has helped me stop CTSIMH. Lastly, keeping busy with fun and challenging music helps.

Still, it creeps into my thinking… Maybe I should start a thread asking, "What is the best antidote to CTSIMH?"

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THEORY OF THE MONTH

Joe Hubbard puts the 'super' into superimposition. Grab this month's theory and run with it!

Welcome back! Superimposition is a concept in which we take the original chord in a tune and then 'superimpose' melodic ideas from another chord on top of that. This works as long as the chord you are superimposing maintains the harmonic integrity of the original chord over which you're playing. Let's take a closer look…

Superimposition is a widely used improvisational principle used by all the great jazz players from Dizzy to Jaco, and is a great way to come up with transposable melodic sequences. If we take a Cmaj7 chord, for example, the chord scale would be the Lydian mode. If we then harmonise the chords from the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th of the scale, we'll end up with Cmaj7, E-7, Gmaj7 and B-7. If, as we said, the original chord in the tune is Cmaj7, then the first step is analysing the notes in the E-7, Gmaj7 and B-7 to understand how those notes will relate back to that Cmaj7 chord.

The root, 3, 5 and 7 in the E-7 chord are E, G, B and D; related to the Cmaj7 chord they become the 3, 5, 7 and 9. The root, 3, 5 and 7 of the Gmaj7 chord are G, B, D and F#; related to the Cmaj7 chord they become the 5, 7, 9 and #11. The root, 3, 5 and 7 of the B-7 chord are B, D, F# and A, which become the 7, 9, #11 and 13 of the Cmaj7 chord. Got it? Good!

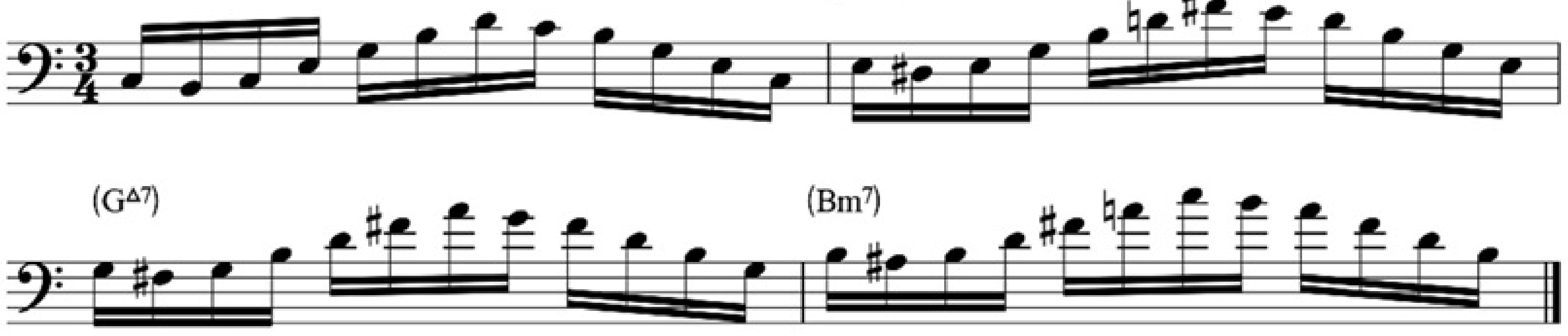
What makes this so valuable melodically is that by superimposing the E-7, Gmaj7 and B-7 over the Cmaj7, you're using a combination of chord tones and tensions related back to the original chord. However, when conceiving a melodic sequence, all you have to do is think of the root, 3, 5 and 7 of whatever chord you choose to superimpose. This is demonstrated in the example below, which takes the same melodic sequence over each one of these chords and then plays all of them over a Cmaj7 chord (the superimposed chords are shown in brackets for reference). Notice how the melodic sequence is exactly the same as the original idea over the Cmaj7.

This is a useful tip when coming up with memorable melodic ideas in your solos – as when you state a melodic idea over one chord and then repeat the same idea over another, it gives the listener something to identify with. Although in this scenario the chords do not change, we give the illusion that they do, because we are superimposing one chord over the other.

Until next time, practise smart, work hard and play creatively!

> "SUPERIMPOSITION IS A WIDELY USED IMPROVISATIONAL PRINCIPLE USED BY ALL THE GREAT JAZZ PLAYERS FROM DIZZY TO JACO, AND IS A GREAT WAY TO COME UP WITH TRANSPOSABLE MELODIC SEQUENCES"

Example 1



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PUTTING THE BASS INTO 80'S ICON RICK ASTLEY WITH BASS CENTRE ELITES STRINGS
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TECHNIQUE OF THE MONTH

EGM

We're delighted to welcome an amazing new column by the great Stu Hamm. If you're looking for a killer technique to add to your bass-playing arsenal, Stu is here to help!

Welcome to the first instalment in a series of articles that I'll be writing for my favourite bass magazines on both sides of the pond. This is truly a pleasure and an honour for me, so I'll do my best to share with you a range of techniques that have been instrumental in my bass playing and songwriting. They will open up your ears and minds, and inspire you to practise, practise, practise.

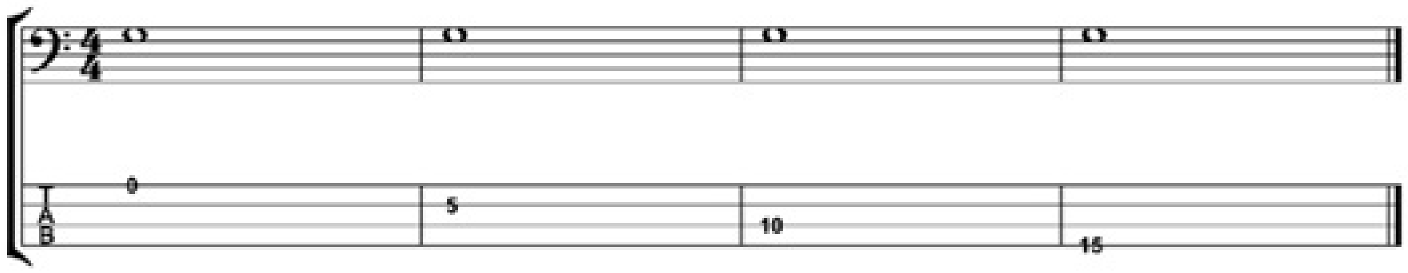
Together, let's find ways to incorporate these techniques into your bass playing, and then inspire you to come up with your own applications and innovations. You can reach me at hammstu@aol.com if you have questions or need clarification. I only charge $17.50 per reply… (Hey, Joel did ask me to include my singular brand of humour in these articles!)

Let's start with a technique that is such a staple of my repertoire that I used it in the very first track of my first CD, *Radio Free Albemuth*, released back in 1988, as well as in the bass-line for the title track from my 2015 release *The Book Of Lies*… and seemingly in everything I've written in between! Let's call it the "open string bend technique", although we won't actually be bending the open string, of course – we will be bending the string next to the open string up to the same note as the open string being played. This will create a unique and easily recognisable flange-like tone.

First I'd like you to play an open G. Now – how many other places on the neck of a four-string bass can you play the same note? I can think of three, as you can see in the tab of the first example over the page.

Above right: Fret an F# on the D string with as much finger strength as possible
Above below: Now bend the D string up to match the open G of the first string. Vary the speed of the bend to build dissonance and tension

Example 1



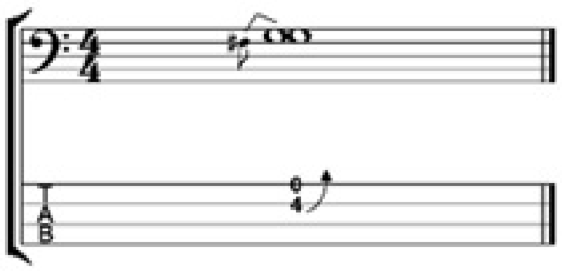
You'll notice that each of these Gs sounds completely different, due to its position on the neck and the size of the string. In future articles, we will discuss how and when to exploit these differences in tone and when to choose each position to complement the style of music that you're playing. For now, we'll stick to the D and G strings. Let's play an F# on the 4th fret of our D string, and bend it up to a G, all the while playing our open G and letting it ring.

Example 2

As you can see in the lower picture, you will have to bend the F# on the D string away from the G string and towards the A string to allow the open G to ring. This will take some practice, but stick with it and you'll be fine. You really need to arch your finger when you play the F# so that it won't touch the open G and stop it from ringing. This will require quite a bit of finger strength, so I suggest that you use your middle finger, as it is usually the strongest. You'll know that you are doing it right when, well… when it sounds good!

When you're starting out, you can cheat a little by sliding the F# on the D string up to the G. You will still get some of the out-of-phase flanging effect, but the tonal effect won't be as dramatic.

You're also free to experiment with how quickly you bend the F# up to the G. The longer you take to bend the first note all the way up to the exact pitch of the second, the more tension this technique creates. If you listen to the recording of the intro to *The Book Of Lies* (see below), you'll notice that at the beginning of the song I bend up to the G immediately, so the technique is subtle at first. As the song progresses, I take longer and longer to bend the F# all of the way up to the G, to increase the dissonance and tension.



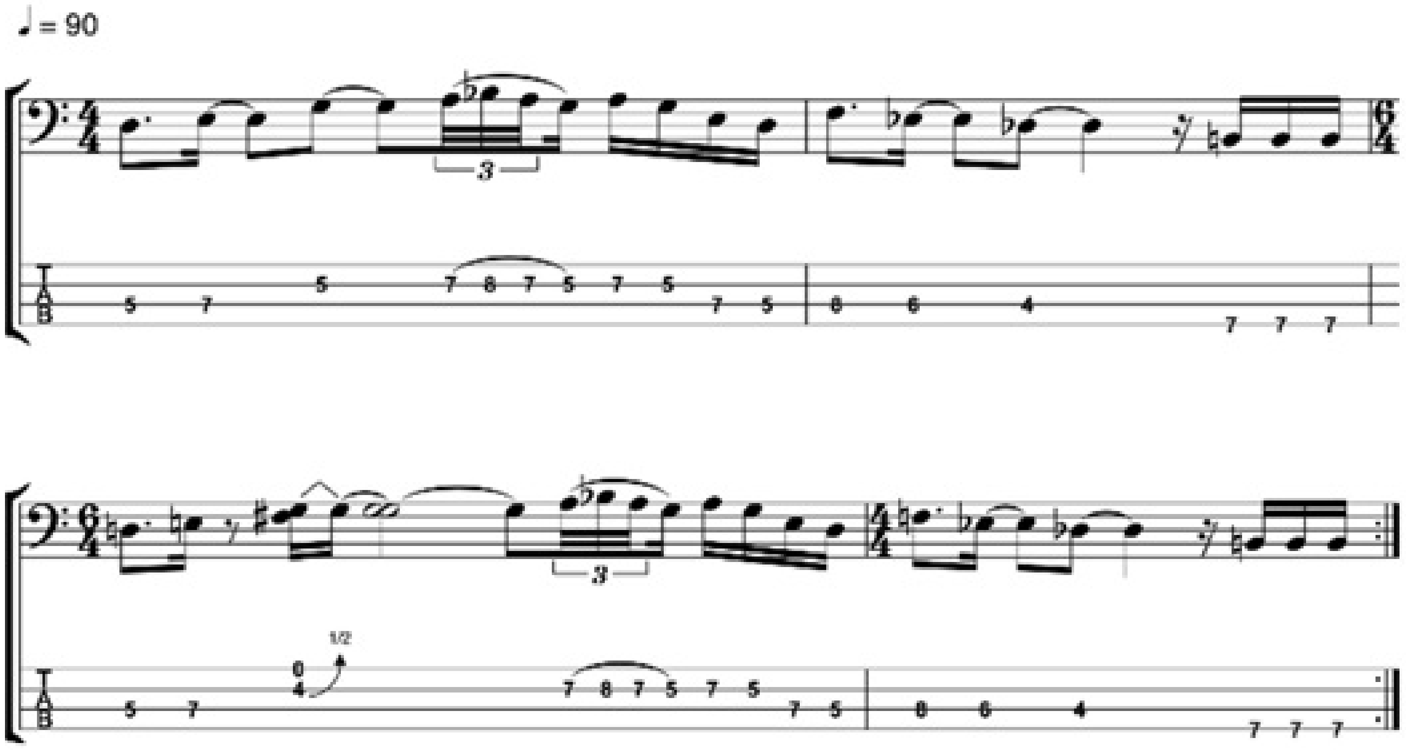
When you're tuning your bass with harmonics, you can hear a beating sound created by the out-of-tune-ness of the strings. As you get closer and closer to the harmonics being in tune, the beating slows down and then disappears altogether when they're in tune. This is the effect that you can really emphasise with a slow bend up of the F# to the G. All it will require is a lot of finger strength, which you can develop with – say them with me – Stu's Three P's: practice, patience, and the passage of time.

Next month I'll be expanding on different ways to incorporate this technique into your playing, including some very cool riffs, but do get this example under your fingers so that we can forge ahead together.

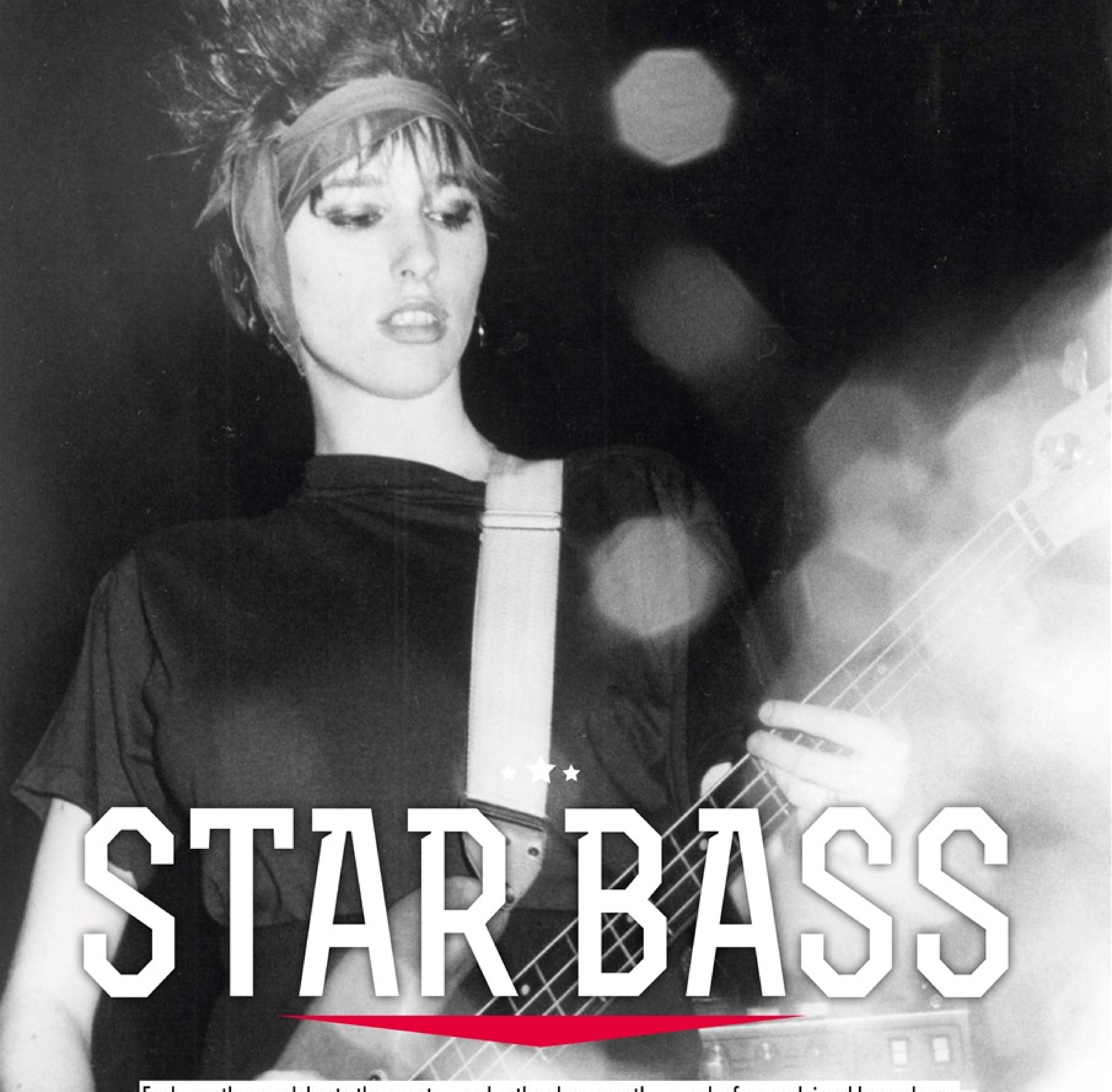
I want to end with another awesome catchphrase: "Remember, it's not the technique that matters, it's how you use it musically to improve the song that you are playing" (Stuart Hamm, ™2018).

If you feel the urge to throw in the latest technique just because you can finally play it cleanly and in time, or just to show off, and this technique has nothing to do with the song or bass-line you are playing – then by all means put down your bass, go buy a guitar and become a guitar player! See you next month…

@StuHammBass



"THE LONGER YOU TAKE TO BEND THE FIRST NOTE ALL THE WAY UP TO THE EXACT PITCH OF THE SECOND, THE MORE TENSION THIS TECHNIQUE CREATES"



STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great – and rather less great! – work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: Caitlin O'Riordan

Words: Joe Shooman Image: Tina K

Caitlin O'Riordan was born in Lagos, Nigeria in 1965 to Irish and Scottish parents; the family relocated to London in 1967 following the outbreak of civil war. She met Shane MacGowan – then of the Nips – at a record shop in the late 70s, bonding over his band's single 'Gabrielle'. MacGowan formed the Pogues in 1982, and O'Riordan accepted his invitation to join. Her bass and vocals can be heard on the *Red Roses For Me* and *Rum, Sodomy & The Lash* albums, and rumour has it that the legendary 'Fairytale of New York' was originally written with her vocals in mind, although the late Kirsty MacColl appeared on the recorded version. O'Riordan, nicknamed 'Rocky', became involved musically and personally with Elvis Costello in the mid-80s before they split in 2002. Subsequent projects included the Radiators, a reunion with the Pogues in 2004, a brief sojourn with new band PreNup and a degree in psychology from University College Dublin. Songwiter, occasional actor, bassist, vocalist and scholar, O'Riordan is hardly your average Celtic punk folk star.

MUST-HAVE ALBUM

The Pogues Rum, Sodomy & The Lash (1985)

The seminal Pogues record shows O'Riordan at her root-and-fifth best. Her trusty P-Bass was the go-to instrument here, and she is technically bang-on from the bouncy walking line of opening track 'The Sick Bed of Cuchulainn' right through to the mournful closer, 'The Band Played Waltzing Matilda'. This track and 'The Old Main Drag' show the value of playing on the beat; the bass here is playing the role of percussion as well as supplying musical scaffolding. As a result, there's a massive amount of space, sonically, which is perfect for a typically rough-arsed MacGowan vocal to throw a story of debauchery right in the face of the listener. Playing with a pick on 'Wild Cats of Kilkenny', O'Riordan channels the *Doctor Who* theme before some sweet glissandos in a middle eight that flits between the jig and the jug. Her vocal talents are showcased on the band's classic interpretation of 'I'm A Man You Don't Meet Every Day', her relatively soft delivery entirely at odds with the boastfulness of the lyric. Under it all, of course, is that locked-in line with the bodhran.

WORTHY CONTENDER

The Pogues Poguetry In Motion (1986)

After this tight, surprisingly poppy EP, O'Riordan left the Pogues to hook up with Elvis Costello. The two were married a year later. 'London Girl' took on an immediate sense of irony and loss, with its lyrics of last dances and last chances. The bass-line comes in waves, up and down, step by step, a far cry from the smack in the face of the previous record's faster moments. The plaintive, beautiful 'A Rainy Night In Soho' feels like a companion piece to 'Fairytale Of New York' (which was recorded at the same sessions, with O'Riordan singing, but does not appear on the EP); her ascending bass and near-doubling of the string parts is effective and affecting. 'The Body Of An American' is a classic O'Riordan bass-line: bouncy folk-punk, fourths and fifths and pushing the song along. 'Planksty Noel Hill' is more of the same, juxtaposed with full-bar root notes under the playful pipes and strings. Also recorded, but not released at the time, was a great cover of the Lovin' Spoonful's 'Do You Believe In Magic'.

COOL GROOVES

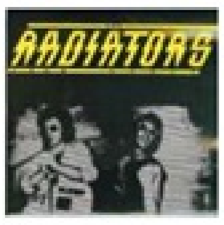
The Pogues Red Roses for Me (1984)

O'Riordan once told an interviewer that being a teenager gave her huge confidence for her recorded debut. The punkiness of the Pogues' debut album is one thing, but traditionalists would point to O'Riordan's fluffed notes in the otherwise fine single 'Dark Streets Of London' as elements which could have been smoothed out. That said, for a relative novice on the instrument, the bassist has a real feel both for the music and the genres. The odd descending major step turn and energetic, simple fifths, firsts and fourths keep the album moving on. It's aggressively dancey, challenging and traditional all at once; somehow the chaos that appears to be just around the corner never quite arrives. O'Riordan's solid, simple lines provide a sterling basis for the banjos and that irrepressible MacGowan vocal, not least on 'Waxies Gargle' and the reeling, roaring 'Down In The Ground Where The Dead Men Go', a particularly punked-up piece of Poguiness.

WILD CARD

PreNup Hell To Pay (2007)

Rolling Stones-esque AOR rock'n'roll is the order of the day for O'Riordan's project alongside Fiachna O'Bronain and Dave Clarke. The name of the band, trivia fans, alludes to the fact that all the group's members were divorcees. The Fender that appears on the cover of the LP is rich and full on the Beatles-bluesy 'Cold Wind', where O'Riordan's plaintive descending whole notes are atmospheric and smooth. On 'Say Goodbye' she gives it some, with major sevenths ascending to the octave. 'Foolish Love' nearly, very nearly, gets the funk on. The line on 'Leave It All Behind' is reminiscent of the Elvis Presley track, 'Suspicious Minds', a comparison that also holds for the guitar. The high-register riff of 'Technicolor' is the sweetest bass on the record, while the most authentically O'Riordan moment is probably 'Headwrecker'. Here she indulges her Ramones side, injecting a sense of urgency into an LP that often meanders around. *Hell to Pay* isn't perfect, but when it works, it really works; 'Swollen' is a kind of through-the-looking-glass Breeders, complete with diminished-note turns by the bassist.



AVOID AT ALL COSTS

The Radiators Plan 9 Television Screen (2004) / The Summer Season (2005)

O'Riordan's brief spell with the Dublin punk legends yielded two EPs that seemed throwaway and somewhat out of their time. Sometime Pogues player Phil Chevron was also involved when the band reformed for a Joe Strummer tribute, but things were far from stable. Diagnosed with depression, O'Riordan had spent three months in rehab at the Priory. Despite a support slot with U2 in Dublin in 2005, it wasn't to last and O'Riordan vacated the bass spot soon after. What remains superb is her vocal on 'Kitty Rickets', from the *Television Screen* EP. The frantic bass throughout the two releases is full of energy, but there's also a raggedness about 'Sunday World' and 'Electric Shares' that was previously absent from the bassist's work. From here, the only way was up for the troubled musician, and O'Riordan – sober for the best part of a decade – recently joined an ace new band, Bitchface, fronted by Syd Straw.

Cuba Libre!

The ultimate rock bass journeyman looks back – and forward. Read and learn!

Interview: Joel McIver **Photos:** Getty, Joe Fuoco, Martin Sims

Rudy Sarzo is a hero of no fewer than six decades of bass. In the 60s, as a Cuban refugee living variously in New Jersey and Florida, he plucked the bass in garage-rock bands. In the 70s, he made his bones with Quiet Riot, pioneers of Hollywood's hair-metal scene. Catapulted to fame in Ozzy Osbourne's band in the 80s, courtesy of a recommendation from his erstwhile Quiet Riot colleague Randy Rhoads, Sarzo toured the planet with bands such as Whitesnake. By the mid-90s he was a classic rock bassist who commanded enormous respect, laying down lines with Yngwie Malmsteen, Dio and Blue Oyster Cult in the decade that followed.

In recent years Sarzo has trodden the boards with Geoff Tate's version of Queensryche, Animetal, and now the Guess Who, where he continues to tour today. He's a bassist with much wisdom to impart, and where better to share it than in these pages? Read on as he talks essential gear, professional attitudes, dealing with the still-shocking tragedy of Rhoads' death in a plane crash in 1982, and the skills you need to take the big sounds to the big stages...

How's it going with the Guess Who, Rudy?

It's going great. I started playing in the 60s, and I know a lot of people think of me as a heavy metal bass player, but I started playing before metal existed as we know it. So the Guess Who's music was part of the soundtrack of my life. We had a new record out a few months ago [*The Future Is What It Used To Be*] and we're playing songs from it. It was really well-received, so it's all good. They keep adding dates, and then in March all the spring tours begin.

Do you still enjoy life on the road?

Oh yes. I know from doing this for so many years that a band like ours has a certain routing, dedicated by flying. A lot of bands in our situation avoid travelling in winter time, and pick it up in March. But I remember going on tour with Ozzy, when [his wife and manager] Sharon Osbourne really wanted to establish him as a solo artist by playing the A, B and C markets. She saw it as an advantage for us to tour in the winter time in the United States, because there would be less competition. There's different schools of thought.

What gear are you using?

I play Spector basses. When Spector asked me to design my signature Euro4 LX, I didn't just want there to be a cosmetic difference between my model and the other signature models. I was walking around NAMM, and a friend of mine grabbed me and said, 'You've got to check out these basses'. They were Martin Sims' Lionheart basses. I saw the Sims Super Quad pickups on them, and I was completely blown away – and I thought, 'This is what I'm looking for. I'll add them to my signature model to make them different from all the other Spector basses'. I'm blown away by the whole diversity of the instrument, to be able to have pickups with so many combinations, from split humbucker, single coil, and double pickups, and have it use the preamp or bypass the preamp. It's just an incredible combination.

> "WHEN I'M ON TOUR, MY BASS SLEEPS WITH ME. I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND PLAY!"

Do you have a preferred setting for those pickups?

No, no. It all depends. I hear a sound in my head, and if I want a Jazz tone, say, then I go for the two single coils. If I'm going for a Precision tone, I just use one pickup, because the way that I have them is with a blend. I just blend it over to the split coil pickup in the front, which basically shuts off the bridge pickup.

Are you equally happy with five strings as well as four?

I play four, I play five, and I also play six. They're all tools for the job, you know. I mean, you can't show up for a job with just a Phillips screwdriver.

Which other endorsement deals do you have?

Oh, I need to go down my pedalboard... Ampeg, D'Addario, Ultimate Ears In Ears, Boss, J Rockett Audio and TC Electronic. Sometimes I need a compressor, sometimes I need a chorus. The TonePrint technology is phenomenal. I also recently started using what is called the SoloDallas Storm, and I've got to give you a little story about that. When I first started playing with Ozzy back in 1981, I inherited three of the original Schaffer-Vega wireless units that used to belong to ELO, the band, because Jet Records was not only the label for ELO as well as Ozzy, but

Sarzo (right) with the huge-selling 80s metal act Quiet Riot

also management. These three wireless units were probably built in the late 70s. As soon as I started playing through the wireless unit, I noticed that my tone really changed. I was getting a certain compression coming out of the unit. And because I don't play with a pick, it really added definition to my playing without me realising what was going on.

That is weird.

All I knew was that I was playing through these wireless units, and my tone had the best definition I'd ever had! As time went

"LIKE EDDIE VAN HALEN SAID, YOU'VE GOT 12 NOTES. DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH THEM"

by, those UHF or VHF frequencies in those units became illegal; just like in *Spinal Tap*, once in a while I would get some interference from planes landing while I was playing. So I put those to one side and they were just sitting on my shelf until recently. But then I played a charity gig not long ago, where we went through the whole AC/DC catalogue, and it turned out that part of Angus Young's guitar sound is that wireless unit. I met Filipe Olivieri, who owns the company SoloDallas, which manufactures replicas of those wireless units in conjunction with Ken Schaffer. One of them is actually a pedal called the Storm, which Filipe gave me – and my tone is right back to what I had in 1981. It's just unbelievable!

You also have a line of acoustic basses with Sawtooth. What makes them a Sarzo bass?

I'd always wanted to create an acoustic bass that would feel as if it had the tension of an electric bass, with 24 frets and a 34" scale. It's pretty much like a regular electric bass, with a beautiful body; it's all flame maple except for the ebony fingerboard. It comes with the brand-new Fishman preamp.

You must have built up quite a collection of basses over the years.

Yeah. I'm more of a keeper now than I was back in the day. I'm collecting more tools, because I do a lot of recording for different projects and various styles of music. If somebody calls me up and says, 'I need you to use this particular instrument because this is what I want it to sound like on the track', then instead of having to go and borrow it from a friend, I already have it in my collection.

Is there some old stuff in there?

I have a '59 Precision. It's just beautiful. It's a slab fretboard, and the pickups are a little bit… what can I say? It's a '59, it's almost as old as I am! But I've got to tell you, this Storm pedal brings it right up to spec. It really does.

How about amps?

I have a few, but for recording, I go straight, and I always leave a DI track that can be reamped, so I also send that to the engineer that's working on a project.

Are you still improving as a bass player?

Oh my God, yeah – which is a problem, because I hear my old recordings and I go, 'I wish I could re-record this now!' It's a journey, though. I play more bass now than I ever have. The bass is always in my hands. When I'm on tour, it sleeps next to me, in bed – because I keep playing until I'm too tired to play, then I just lay it down next to me, and then I wake up in the morning and pick it up again.

You were a guitar player first, right?

Yes, I started playing guitar when I was living in New Jersey, but I wasn't much of a chord player. I would play melodies on the guitar, which made easier to go from playing the guitar melodically to playing the bass, especially in the era when Paul McCartney and James Jamerson were all over the radio. All the bass playing you heard at the time was quite melodic.

Why did you switch from guitar to bass?
When we moved from New Jersey to Miami, I must have been around 16, not even 17 yet. I went to the band that was rehearsing in the garage on my block, introduced myself and told the guys, 'I play guitar, I want to join your band'. They said, 'Well, we've got too many guitar players. Can you play the bass?' I really wanted to join the band, so I said, 'Oh God, okay…' and they talked me into it. The guy said, 'Listen, playing the bass is just like playing a solo during the whole song'. That's the way he put it, and I thought, 'That sounds good…'

What was your first bass?
My first original four-string was a Kingston bass. I sold it to a kid in Miami and then I bought a Gibson EB. Mine was just a single pickup model with volume and tone. It was headstock-heavy, so I got rid of it, and my next bass was a Rickenbacker. I showed a photo of it at NAMM to the person that now owns Rickenbacker, and he said, 'Oh man, that bass is worth about $10,000 now'. And I said, 'Oh well. Who knew?'

What did being a guitarist bring to your bass playing?
It's the old Eddie Van Halen quote of 'You've got 12 notes. Do whatever you want with them'. It was about getting outside of that diatonic box, especially in the 80s, man. The 60s and 70s were more melodic, more outside the box, and harmonically richer than the 80s. I got to play a lot of those diatonic songs, and some of them were really big hits. As a matter of fact, I've looked back and transcribed the early Ozzy stuff, because I said, 'Let me really analyse what we were playing back then'. I looked at the *Blizzard Of Ozz* record (1980) and I went, 'Wow, most of the compositions that Randy did with Ozzy on this record were very intelligently diatonic compositions. If you break down 'Mr. Crowley', it's all D minor, F Major. Every chord in all the modes of F Major was applied to that song, and it was really smart the way it was done. It wasn't like a pop hit. It was very dark and broody; Randy utilised all that. Now, he did the same thing with 'Goodbye To Romance', which is a very pretty, beautiful song in D Major. And then, by the time he got to *Diary Of A Madman* (1981), he broke away from that. He started using parallel modes in his compositions. That was the shift right there. But it only happened on *Diary*, because

Sarzo (left) next to the late Randy Rhoads in 1981; Tommy Aldridge and Ozzy Osbourne (far right) complete a line-up that was a seminal rock band by any standard

Randy passed away and he didn't get to make another Ozzy record.

I really enjoyed your book, Off The Rails. The late 70s in Hollywood sound like an amazing era.
Oh, thank you. Back then, if you were from the Sunset Strip, you weren't really labelled as a metal band. You were just a rock band – hard rock, like Van Halen. By the time that I joined Quiet Riot in '78, we were going through the rock versus new wave and punk period. As I learned when I joined Ozzy and started spending time in England, bands like Iron Maiden, Saxon, Motörhead, and so on were already making their statement in the late 70s in England, whereas that was not really the case in Los Angeles.

You got very well-known with Quiet Riot.
When I rejoined what was known as the 'Metal Health' version of Quiet Riot, nobody thought we were going to achieve anything. We were just going to be another dinosaur band putting out a record. That's the way that we were treated by the local industry, and fortunately MTV came along and we did a couple of videos and [QR's 1983 cover of Slade's '73 song] 'Cum On Feel The Noize' became a hit.

What were the basses you were playing back then?
Washburn and Music Man, and I also carried with me a practice bass, which happened to be a Roland GR. You remember the first Roland synthesiser bass? You could actually go through a big synthesiser, or you could go out analogue and use the pickup.

What happened to that really cool black-and-white Washburn you had?
It's somewhere in Japan. I sold it to a Japanese collector back in the 90s. I look back and I think I should have kept it, but we entered the grunge period in the 90s and that was not a grunge bass, if you know what I mean. It had a certain tone, with original Bill Bartolini handwired pickups. Bill used to wire everything for me personally, so it's definitely a collectable. Actually, I used that bass on *Speak Of The Devil* (1982), Ozzy's re-recordings of Black Sabbath songs.

I always wondered how you approached Geezer Butler's bass parts on those Sabbath songs. Did you deliver them as they were originally, or did you add your own spin?
I played exactly what was on the records, which was very challenging because there were a lot of really cool riffs that are very

Sarzo with his signature Sawtooth bass

exclusive. It's a very original style of playing, very stylised, so when I played on the record I was just trying to do justice to Geezer's blueprint of what the song is.

What kind of guy was Randy Rhoads?
My God. That's the million-dollar question. That is the number one question I get asked when I travel, and that's why I wrote *Off The Rails*, just to answer that. I'll put it this way: I can say what Randy means to me. If it wasn't for Randy, I would have never had the career that I've had, because he trusted me. This was

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4 String Basses

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15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

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16343 - Cort Action 4 PJ Bass Guitar, Walnut
14315 - Cort Action 4 String Bass, Black
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
16608 - Cort B4 Plus Artisan 4-String Lefthanded
16984 - Cort GB54JJ 4-String Bass Guitar Natural
16396 - Cort GB74JJ AB Aqua Blue
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 4 String Bass
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass
18466 - Dean 4-String Fretless, Trans Green Used
18184 - Epiphone EB3 Black, Secondhand

Fender

16413 - Fender Aerodyne Jazz Bass Black, Used
18490 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18491 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass A. White
18492 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Penny
18489 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Surf Green
18493 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, Sburst
18494 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, White
18496 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, Aub.
18495 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, SGreen
18485 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass Sunburst
18486 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass A.White
18488 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass Penny
18487 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass LP Blue
18246 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Sunburst
16450 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Natural
17076 - Fender American Pro P Bass, Sunburst
18300 - Fender Classic Series 60s Jazz L, OWhite
16298 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink, Used
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
16448 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass, Black
16284 - Fender JMJ Mustang Bass, F. Daphne Blue
16895 - Fender Limited Edition 70s P Bass Nat
15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
17091 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Torino Red
18438 - Fender Parallel Universe Am. 51 Tele
18192 - Fender Player Jaguar Bass, Tidepool
18095 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Black
18244 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
16595 - Fender Std MIM Jazz Bass Candy Apple Red
14324 - Fender Standard P Bass, Sunburst, Used
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst
18422 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGMN
18423 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGRN
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
18137 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass, Matt Black
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
18369 - Ibanez SR300 4-String Bass, Purple, Used
16914 - Ibanez SR500 Bass in Brown Mahogany
17063 - Italia Maranello Bass, Black Sparkle
18208 - Italia Torino Bass, Trans Blue, Used
16731 - Marvit Apoll PJ4C 4 String Bass, Used

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16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
18253 - MusicMan Stingray 4, Blue Pearl, Used
16149 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Black
15941 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Heritage TobBurst
18114 - NS Design WAV4 Double Bass Trans Black
15106 - Orange O Bass Tear Drop Sunburst
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18399 - Spector Bass Legend 4 Classic L.Fretless
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
16681 - Squier Affinity P Bass PJ Pack, S.Burst
16567 - Squier Classic Vibe P Bass 70s, Black
18136 - Squier Contemporary Jazz Bass, OBM
18338 - Squier Vintage Mod. Jaguar Bass Special
16569 - Squier Vintage Mod Jazz Bass 70s, Nat
17744 - Sterling by Music Man Sub Ray 4 Bass Red
17042 - Tanglewood TE4 BL Alpha, Blue
17041 - Tanglewood TE4 CP Alpha, Copper
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
14490 - Vintage LV4 Lefthanded 4 String
14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
18030 - Warwick Thumb 5 Bolt On, Brown Stain
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red
0000 - Yamaha - 3 Models In Stock Now

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16985 - Cort Action Bass V Plus TR Trans Red
16788 - Cort A5 Plus FMMH 5 String, Black Cherry
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
13803 - Cort B5 5 String, Tobacco Sunburst, Used
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
16744 - Ibanez SR30TH5 NNF
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
18254 - MTD Saratoga Deluxe, 3 Tone Sunburst
16288 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass
17879 - Yamaha TRBX605FM 5 String Dark Red Burst

Bass Cabinets

13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
6457 - Ashdown ABM115H Compact EVO IV Cab
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10" Cabinet
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cabinet
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cabinet
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10" Cabinet
16800 - BLU Guitar Nanocab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16089 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo
18368 - Hartke HyDrive HX410, Used
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super Combo K1 Alain Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown Engineering

15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10"
17805 - Ashdown AAA EVO 100-BT
15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
15953 - Ashdown ABM410 Bass Combo, S-hand
5669 - Ashdown EB180 12 Evo2 (180W, 1x12)
17803 - Ashdown OriginAL C112T Combo
17804 - Ashdown OriginAL C210 300 Bass Amp
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO2 500w
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)

EDEN

12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo
17118 - Fender Rumble Studio 40, 1x10 Combo
16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo
16445 - Gallien Krueger MB112 Bass Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W)
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona

ORANGE

9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo
15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Amp Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Amp Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Amp Combo
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

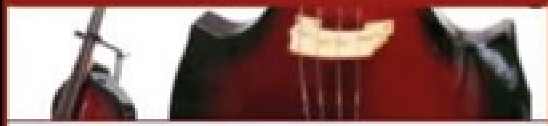
Roland

4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
18035 - Roland Cube CB60XL Bass Amp
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
16758 - Vox Adio Air BS Bass Guitar Amp
16470 - Vox VX50BA Bass Amp Combo
5422 - Vox amPlug-BS Bass Guitar Practice Amp

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
15115 - ABM600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Head
13131 - Ashdown CTM100 100W Valve Bass Head
17784 - Ashdown CTM30 Little Stubby 30w Head
17779 - Ashdown CTM-300 Head
17012 - Ashdown Geezer Butler Signature Amp Head
17794 - Ashdown OriginAL HD-1 Head
17787 - Ashdown RM500 EVO II Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
18116 - GR Bass One 800 Bass Amp Head
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head
16339 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head, Used
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
17148 - Peavey MiniMax 500W Bass Amp Head
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

Electric & Silent Basses

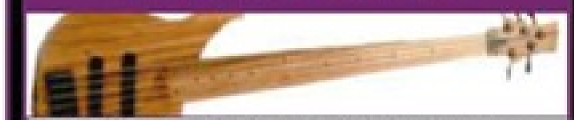


4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double , Black
16847 - NS Design NXTA Upright Bass, Active
14014 - Yamaha SLB100 Silent Upright Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Acoustic Basses

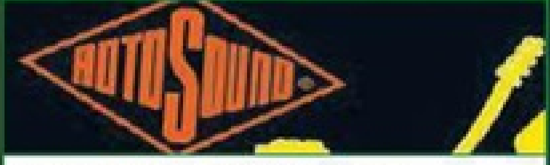
15771 - Ortega D Walker , Mahogany
12180 - Protection Racket Ac. Bass Case Dlx
15117 - Takamine GB30CE ElectroAcoustic Blck

Fretless Basses



16769 - Cort B4 FL Plus AS OPN Fretless Bass
18466 - Dean 4-String Fretless, Trans Green Used
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 Blk Used
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

String Deals



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the scenario: Ozzy was about 10 days away from going on the road, and they were in Los Angeles looking for a bass player. Not only a person that could play those songs, because there were many qualified musicians who could do that, but they needed somebody they could trust. I had already worked with Randy in Quiet Riot, so he told Sharon, 'Listen, Rudy is the perfect guy because he's not going to be a bad influence on Ozzy. He looks good, he's reliable, and he's going to be somebody decent to hang with in the bus.'

Randy knew you well, of course.
He trusted me. He put his reputation with Sharon and Ozzy on the line to bring me in. That's how I got in, because I had no track record. Ozzy and Sharon brought me in and I was able to build a career from that and I am eternally grateful both to them and to Randy. And then, in addition, I am

"RANDY RHOADS PUT HIS REPUTATION WITH SHARON AND OZZY ON THE LINE TO BRING ME IN"

a thousand percent convinced that Randy saved everybody in Ozzy's tourbus, keeping the plane from crashing into us. It clipped the bus, but it did not crash [directly] into the bus, and if that had happened, we would all have perished along with Randy and the others in the plane.

Sarzo slaying the proverbial dragon of rock with the late, incredibly great Ronnie James Dio

Jumping from one massive band to another, did you just slot right in with Whitesnake when you joined them in '87?
One of the blessings in my career is the fact that I get to play with musicians and bands that I am a fan of. That's very rare, especially for some kid from Miami. I mean, who else can say that? Especially when you're living in an area and a culture where the chances of that happening to you are zero! First of all, you're not English. You're not living in England. You're not even American; at the time I wasn't an American citizen yet. I was just an immigrant, a permanent resident, basically – a Cuban refugee that became an American citizen. So for me to go and play with Ozzy and with Tommy Aldridge, whose playing I loved in Black Oak Arkansas, and of course Randy in Quiet Riot... it was incredible.

Now, one of the bands that supported Quiet Riot on the 1984 Condition Critical tour was Whitesnake. That's how I got to know [Whitesnake members] David Coverdale and Neil Murray, and of course John Sykes and Cozy Powell. I recalled the last night of the tour, as we were saying our goodbyes, David gave me a hug and said, 'Someday we're going to play together'. I had already given notice, even before we started the tour, to the members of Quiet Riot that it was going to be my last tour with the band. So I was wondering, 'How does David know that I'm leaving?'

At the end of the tour, as soon as I finished my commitment with Quiet Riot and was a free agent, I got a call from Whitesnake's management, and we met. David and John were working in the south of France, writing the new record, and Tommy and I went into the office. I was witness to internal conflict within Whitesnake during that tour, and I thought that it would not be wise for me to leave one situation for another situation, so I passed on the opportunity to make a record.

A couple of years later, in '87, when David was ready for the *1987* record to be released and for the tour to start, I got the call to do the 'Still Of The Night' video, along with [Whitesnake's new guitarists] Vivian Campbell and Adrian Vandenberg. So we all met at that video shoot and it was instant

chemistry. We were like, 'Oh wow, if you're doing this, I guess I'm doing this too'. The chemistry was right and it just felt perfect. It was a great combination of people.

You had a bass back then that I absolutely loved, an Aria Pro II.
Yeah, it was a custom. I asked them to put Alembic pickups in some of them and Bartolinis in others. I really had to reshape my tone for Whitesnake, because it was the first time I ever played with two guitar players. Vivian was on my side of the stage, and his sound at the time was huge. It almost went into my bass frequency, so I had to really change my tone. I stayed with them for seven years. The last time I toured with Queensryche was '94.

That's a lot of air miles.
Yeah, I know. I'm a million-miler on American Airlines.

Do they give you anything when you reach a million?
They gave me a little tag that I can put on my suitcase. That's all I get. Not even preferred seating!

You played Peavey basses for a long time.
I was with Peavey up until Mike Powers, the master luthier that I worked with for so many years, passed away in 2013. I'm very proud of the Sarzo basses. They've gotten so many great reviews, all five-star reviews. When I sat down with them to design the bass, we did it from headstock to tail. I told them, 'Let's give the customer their money's worth. Let's design something that should be worth about $1500 but sell it for less than $1000. The market does not need another $1500 bass.' I was thinking about my first real working bass, a Jazz that I bought in '67 for maybe $300 or $400. My principle was, 'Let's put a professional instrument in the hands of beginners, because that instrument should inspire them to play'.

What advice can you give kids buying their first bass?
I do these regular events called Rock And Roll Fantasy Camps, and we get a lot of beginners. They come to me with their instruments and say, 'Can you tune my bass?' or whatever, and I pick it up and the action is horrible, the tone, everything. They just don't know any better; they think this is the way it should be. So I wind up tweaking their basses, lowering the action, getting the intonation right, spending about half an hour fixing it for them. Then I talk to their parents and I say, 'I know that you don't know if your son or daughter is going to stick with playing this instrument,

Sarzo playing through his Sims pickups

Sharing a moment with Martin Sims and Nick Smith of Sims Guitar Works

but try to give them something that inspires them to get up every morning and want to improve and learn. That's the most important thing'.

Any tips for readers who would like to make a career as a bass player?
I would say that the key element to a sustained career would be trust. That is something that you can only build by experience, from gig to gig. When I first started playing, I did not foresee my career as a journeyman. I wanted to be in one band, and one band only, for the rest of my career, and I can trace back the reason why I've gone from band to band. Randy passed away and I did not know how to deal with that. I did not realise, back in 1982 when Randy passed, that I, along with everybody else, was supposed to celebrate his legacy by playing his music. I ran away from it, because it was such a devastating, traumatic experience. Nowadays I understand the importance of that.

You were just a young man at the time.
And we were traumatised. We still are. You can ask Ozzy, Sharon, Tommy, Don Airey, all the people that were there to experience it. We've never been the same. So we just learn how to deal with it and make the best of life. Getting back to trust, don't ever walk away from a gig, don't ever do anything to get yourself fired. Be the first guy that everybody's going to call because they know that you're going to be professional, you're going to learn the songs, and you're going to add something to the band that would help them get to the next level. And I'm just being superficial here; I'm not even getting in deep, because I can spend hours talking about the importance of this.

The other important thing is to learn. Learn, learn, learn. It's always about improving. A musician never stops learning and progressing. And never set limitations. I've come to the realisation that I'm never going to be the bass player that I aspire to be, because I really don't want to do that. I never want to get to the point that I say, 'Okay, I'm done. I've learned everything I wanted to learn'. No, never! There's so much more to learn, to expand on your knowledge.

What mindset do you need to join a band?
Be as professional as possible. Remember, when you join the band, the band is not joining you. I've worked with so many incredible musicians who, when they join a band, do not take into account the legacy of that band. It's not just about your own personal contribution. It's about learning the catalogue the way it was originally recorded, and then listening to current versions of how the group is playing it. Of course they expect you to add your own personality, but don't change what you're doing so much in reference to the original that the audience is not going to recognise the song any more. Especially in a legacy band, there are certain melodies and moments within the songs that the audience expects.

A lot of musicians think of music as a job, but of course it's bigger than that.
It is way bigger than that. I think I can say this for every musician: we were fans before we were professional musicians. And we must always remain fans of music, of what we do, of the bands that we play with, and of the legacy of the bands. At the end of the day, we musicians who are in legacy bands playing catalogues, we are memory merchants. The audience comes to watch our show to reconnect with a certain moment in time, and we bring that joy to them again. It's a celebration, what we do on stage.

www.rudysarzo.com, www.theguesswho.com.

"I LOVE BEING AN ARTIST, BECAUSE I GET TO SAY AND DO WHAT I BELIEVE IN"

Divine Intervention

As outspoken as she is talented, Divinity Roxx is an icon for many bassists. We get some quality time with the woman who originally put the low B in Beyoncé

Interview: Jacob Barlow **Photograph:** Ian Frank

For many bassists, touring and recording with the legendary Victor Wooten would be a career highpoint, but for Divinity Roxx it was just the start. From that auspicious beginning she went on to spend five years working with arguably the biggest name in pop – Beyoncé Knowles, for whom Divinity provided not only some of the most locked-in bass ever, but also visionary musical direction, playing a pivotal role in the sound of some of Queen B's most iconic album tours.

Since then she's been busy with a successful solo career, adding two new albums, 2012's *The Roxx Boxx Experience* and 2016's *ImPossible* (as in 'I'm possible') to her 2003 offering, *Ain't No Other Way*. As well as lighting up the stage with her bass style, Divinity's an accomplished singer and rapper, whose songs range from the smoothest jazz, via the edgiest rock, to the spikiest hip-hop, taking in some pretty damn funky moments along the way too. *ImPossible* was acclaimed for its musical and lyrical content, winning an Independent Music Award.

All of this is to say nothing of Divinity's activism. She's made it her mission to be an advocate for black women in music, and to promote opportunities in music for players across the world. She wants to make sure that everyone has an equal chance to discover their talent for music. With this in mind, it's no surprise that she's a busy woman. Between this interview taking place and you reading it, she'll have played and spoken at multiple events, including San Francisco's Yerba Buena Performing Arts Centre, which she'll have attended as a representative of Black Women Rock. She'll also have treated New York to a stripped-down, acoustic take on *ImPossible*.

We caught up with Divinity at GuitCon, a convention for musical YouTubers and endorsing artists at the Warwick factory in Markneukirchen, Germany. We found her kicking back and laying down a relaxed groove at the Ortega stand, looping drum patterns with pedals while building up a layered bass-line from deceptively simple building blocks. Although she was simply jamming, it was enough to make people stop and take notice – even jaded music pros setting up their stands on a grey Monday morning. After the moment was over, we asked her to sit down for a brief chat, to which she enthusiastically agreed.

It's immediately clear that whether she's playing bass, talking, or listening, Divinity is always engaged with what she is doing. When we say someone is 'serious' or 'intense', we also tend to imagine that they're bloody miserable, but Divinity manages to be both of the former while still being cheerful and good humoured. It's a trick that makes her very easy to talk to.

What brings you to GuitCon, Divinity?

I'm a Warwick artist and this is my first year at GuitCon. I was invited to come and check out what they were doing. It's actually really exciting. As an independent artist there's always room for growth and learning experiences, and this is certainly one for me. I'm looking forward to seeing how I can expand my own business and how I can partner with the companies here, and learn from some of the YouTubers here.

What have you put out recently?

Recently I've been working on a project called *Girl, The Album*, which is put together by the women who do the She Rocks awards, and the Women's International music network out of Los Angeles. Laura Whitmore and Jenna Paone are two songwriters who work closely with the organisation. Laura is the founder of WiMN, the Women's International Music Network, and the She Rocks awards. They wanted to do something that was really inspiring for young girls – inspiring and empowering. So they've written all these incredible songs and they asked me to come in and produce three of them. That's what I'm working on right now. We're raising money for the album on the Kickstarter platform and others. Oh man, it's kicking! I'm really excited by it. And I'm staying fairly busy, working on a new project.

You've had a very successful career so far.

Is that what they call it? I'm still in it, man! I love playing bass guitar, I love being an artist, because I get to say and do what I believe in and share the essence of that in my art and my music. I get to grow as a musician, too, so yeah, I'm having a good time. I was just accepted into this project in California called Zoo Labs, their Artist in Residency programme. So I'm going to be recording my next project in San Francisco next year. I'm going to let the cat out of the bag: one of my goals on my next album is to put together the original Beyoncé band and dedicate two days of my studio to recording them. I'm going to get them all to San Francisco, and whatever we record I'm going to put it on my next album. You're the first person I have ever told that to!

Thank you! What gear are you using?

My number one bass is a four-string Streamer LX from Warwick's custom shop. I call him Larry Graham. It's all white, with a cherry body and maple neck, a cherry headstock and a wenge fretboard. I've got two-way MEC Jazz pickups, and gold hardware – and of course my signature bass clef 'D's for 'Divinity' up and down the neck. I love this bass. It goes with me everywhere. I've recorded several projects with it. You can hear it on the *ImPossible* album. You can see me play it all over the world.

What does 2019 hold for you?

Apart from two weeks in Zoo Labs recording my new album, I'm also part of a programme called Next Level. It's a programme put together by the US State Department where they send out teams of hip-hop artists into the world to teach and share hip-hop with people from other cultures. I'm the resident MC, and my team is going to the Dominican Republic. Other teams are going to cities in Nigeria, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Costa Rica… So those are a couple of things I'm doing next year. Oh, and I'm getting married, so 2019 is already shaping up to be a pretty cool year for me!

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> "I THOUGHT WHAT THE HECK, I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE THE HIGH F STRING, TOO!"

Magnificent Seven

Into the extended range with seven-stringer Jason Everett...

Interview: Chris Jisi

The imposing sight of Jason Everett's seven-string fretless belies the transcendental, collective nature of his music on his new album and video package, *Playing With Fire*. Joined by Trey Gunn on his lap-held Warr Guitar, seven-string violinist Radhika Iyer, V Selvaganesh on kanjira and custom drum kit, Anil Prassad on tabla, violinist Rachel Nesvig, violist Aleida Gehrels, and cellist Paul Hirschi, Everett delivers memorable melodies rendered with Eastern vocal vibrato, and engaging ensemble improvisation – all over a spectrum of ever-shifting world grooves and natural-sounding odd meters.

Born in Colorado and raised outside of Phoenix, Everett began playing woodwinds at the age of eight before seeing Donald 'Duck' Dunn in the *Blues Brothers* movie and becoming captivated by the bass. He started on a Hohner electric bass and soon fell under the sway of Rush and Geddy Lee, graduating to a Rickenbacker 4001. Joining his high school jazz band, he got turned onto Jaco Pastorius, and the lure of fusion and experimental jazz. At 18, he moved to Minneapolis and claimed the bass chair in the free jazz group Little Green Men, whose members turned him onto his most pervasive influence: John McLaughlin's famed 1974 quintet, Shakti. "Shakti connected me with my truer, deeper, spiritual self as a musician and composer," he notes.

Realising the creative and financial challenges of raising a family as a working musician, Everett moved to Seattle, took a day job, and put music on the back burner. With his kids grown, he put himself back on the map in 2014 via a YouTube version of 'Jog', an Indian raga in which he doubled and emulated the phrasing of vocalist Ujwai Nagar using his extended-range fretless bass. He made further inroads with *Moksha: The Elimination Of All Duality*, featuring Selvaganesh and guitarist Fareed Haque. He regards *Playing With Fire* as his most proud musical statement to date.

How did you write for the record and what was your inspiration?

I consider myself a fusion artist in that I blend all of my influences – prog rock, jazz, classical, world and Indian music – into my compositions. I write mostly on bass; lately I've been using my Roland RC-300 Loop Station. That's how I wrote 'Mysterious World'. One of the compositional methods that has evolved for me is being able to create different bass-lines, feels and chord changes for the same melody – you can hear that on 'Return' and 'Resolve'. The Loop Station allows me to write a melody and a bass-line, and then take out that first bass-line and try other grooves and chord progressions to express different emotions, while still supporting the melody.

Let's talk about your fretless seven-string OM bass and the techniques you've developed on it.

I had bought an inexpensive six-string on eBay, and I dug the high C string and the ability to play a wide range in one position. So I went back online and found a used Conklin fretless GT-7. I thought what the heck, I might as well have the high F string, too! Bill Conklin saw my video for 'Jog' with that bass and he and Mike Apperson contacted me, and we co-designed my seven-string OM bass in 2016. It's a neck-through with a seven-piece zebrawood and wenge neck, walnut wings, and a cocobolo and yellowheart top.

How about the electronics?

It has a three-band EQ, two custom Bartolini pickups, Graph Tech piezo pickups in the bridge saddles, Hipshot Xtenders on the A and D strings, and a MIDI system which I never use. I don't have any special technique except that I mostly play across the neck by position, as opposed to up and down the fingerboard, and I use both hands to dampen the open strings. Generally, I pluck close to the bridge for a punchy, growly sound, varying tones between the Bartolini and piezo pickups.

Your other key voice is your fretted six-string Warwick Alien acoustic.

That's featured on 'Awakenings'. It was given to me by Bay Area jazz bassist Edo Castro. I use it for my sitar technique of playing a melody on the top string and using the remaining strings as resonant drone strings. As with the sitar, playing the melody on one string requires moving large distances up and down the fingerboard very quickly. I tune it high C, low C, high C, and then G, C, F below that.

Do you find that having a video version of the album enhances the music?

It's a concept I borrowed from Snarky Puppy: record the music live, have a multi-camera shoot, and create a compelling video with compelling music. Puppy is a band that plays mostly instrumentals, yet has a huge, young audience; that's a model which more artists need to embrace.

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The Sound Of Wood

We pick up our jaws after a tour of Warwick's futuristic bass facility

Words: Jacob Barlow

Walking in to the Warwick factory in the rural village of Markneukirchen at the eastern border of Germany, I've got a few expectations; I know I'm going to find out what it takes to create Warwick basses and Framus guitars. I'm also pretty sure I'm going to get a look at some of the company's extraordinary custom finishes being made.

What I didn't expect was just how much of the tour would focus on the subject of wood. I know that the substance is important, of course, and that a great sound comes from attention to detail, but seriously, these guys are world experts. They've got over 45 different types of the stuff, not counting all the different grades they've got. There's bubinga, rosewood, ebony, wenge, camphor, flame maple, and countless others. We're even shown a piece of mahogany that's distinctively marked from having been used as a counter-top in the production of Parmesan cheese. Although the first wood we are shown is raw, its quality already shines through. Rapping a random chunk of maple with my knuckles yields a high, hollow drum sound that hints at the acoustic properties it will one day impart to an instrument.

The company are refreshingly relaxed about giving me full access. "Feel free to go anywhere", Warwick's Ove Bosch tells me. "We don't have secrets here." The company isn't joking about this. There's a representative from a rival manufacturer along for the tour with us, being made just as welcome as everyone else. This is going to be an in-depth look at the processes and philosophy behind the company's instruments.

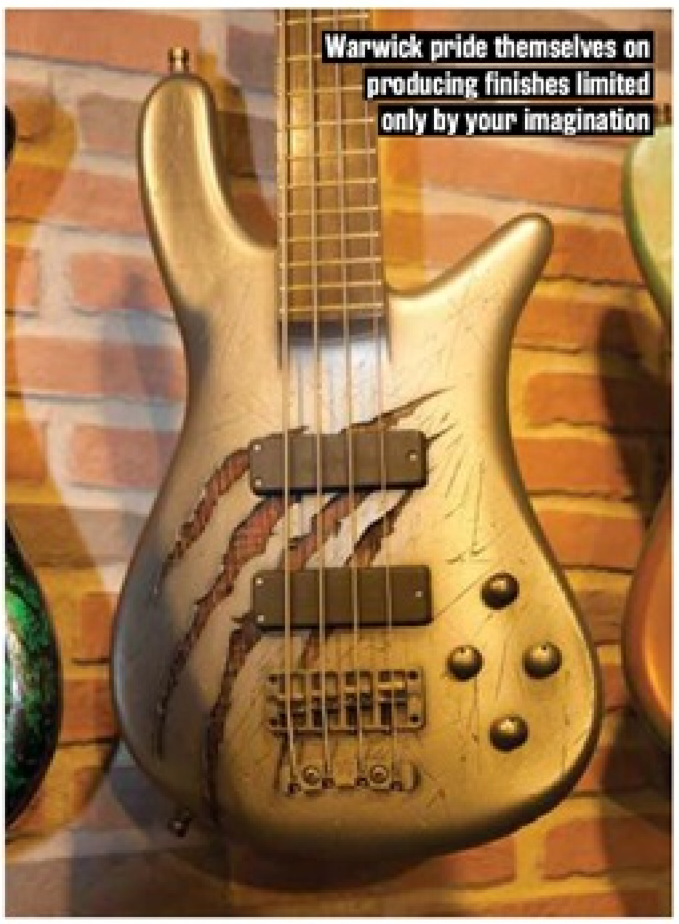
All that wood is treated with care. After the initial natural drying stage, it's moved into a humidity- and temperature-controlled warehouse to complete the three- to five-year air-drying process (guaranteed five years for custom shop models). From that point onwards, every room it passes through in the manufacturing process is a strictly controlled environment. Non-custom shop woods are finished in a drying kiln. The tour is conducted by the head of Warwick's custom shop, Marcus Spangler, who explains that the conditions in the kiln are initially kept humid and then made slowly drier. This lets the wood dry all the way through; starting with completely dry conditions would damage it, because the outside would dry faster than the middle.

A gigantic burl of California walnut sits among the myriad woods drying in Warwick's warehouse

The dried wood is then sorted by how much moisture remains in it. Each piece is used only with pieces of similar moisture levels, so that any future expansion or contraction happens evenly and cannot damage the instruments. After this, one of the first jobs is to assemble the correct grains to make a strong bolt-on neck. The centre of the neck has a grain that runs up and down its length. It's supported on either side by woods with grains that run diagonally, so that the natural properties of the instruments' materials work together with its man-made structure to make it as strong as possible.

After the wood is ready, much of the early process of making a Warwick instrument is automated. Necks and bodies appear almost magically from the clouds of sawdust thrown up by the factory's CNC machining tools. Automation doesn't mean that Warwick's attention to detail goes away, though. In fact, machining is their preferred method for some jobs that could be done more easily by hand, because they value the precision it offers. Countless small details are overseen to ensure that every instrument is perfect, from the way the bodies are shaped to accommodate the bolt-on necks with every attaching screw flush to the instrument, to the fact that the sides of the body are pre-shaped to perfectly fit the soundboard, negating the need to use clamps in assembly. And after it's put together, every instrument is hand finished in the same workshop that is used for Warwick's custom shop work.

Having seen the instruments put together, we're shown Warwick's unique lacquering process. Their lacquer is now much thinner than it was in the past, but also hardier. To demonstrate the point, Marcus pours pure acetone onto a recently lacquered bass body. Two minutes later, it's untouched. This finish has better looks too; dried by ultra-violet light rather than a chemical process, it has no small bubbles, meaning the lacquer is perfectly clear. Most importantly though, the finish lets the basses' natural tone ring out unfettered. Those lovingly dried and assembled woods are finally free to give their all to the finished instruments' tones.



Warwick pride themselves on producing finishes limited only by your imagination

The factory's CNC machines ensure that every element of every instrument is perfect

Top-shelf lacquers aren't the end of Warwick's finishing options, though. Do you want a bass fully clad in stainless steel? They can do that for you. Do you, like Stuart Hamm, want a bass that looks like Dr. Strange? They can do that too. Or maybe you're like Devin Townsend and you want a guitar with an onboard smoke machine and laser show. No problem. "If you can imagine it, we can do it," says Marcus. "And if what you want is not possible… we can do that too."

After the tour, I get a chance to talk to Marcus in person. I kick off by asking him to define his role at the custom shop. "I'm the idiot for everything," he replies with deadpan delivery. "No, of course I take care of the Warwick and Framus production; that's my major job. If you can dream it, we can build it. This slogan says pretty well everything that we are doing. You can change nearly everything. Not the headstock or body shape, but everything else can be adjusted to your needs. That's something that you don't find elsewhere in the industry."

With such a strong emphasis on sky-is-the-limit imagination in bass design, I wonder what Marcus's proudest achievement is. "Most of the designs are [Warwick founder] Hans-Peter Wilfer's, of course. The only thing that we did together was the Idolmaker bass, which is the latest one. To be honest, my favourite is the Thumb bass. It's unique, it's small, it's something nobody else has. You have to adjust your style of playing, but overall it's fine, and of course the name 'Thumb' says everything."

On the tour, Marcus was keen to talk about the ethics of sourcing Warwick's woods, and it's a subject he's happy to revisit. It's obviously important to him that people understand the company takes its ethical responsibilities very seriously. "Warwick is known for using very exotic woods, and these woods come mainly from Africa," he says. "As you know, everybody is cutting down and killing the rainforests. The truth is it's not furniture or the music industry killing the rainforest – it's the coal and palm oil industries.

"We've been working for years with companies based in Europe. They have pressure on them because they're watched by the WWF, for example. If they went into the forest and did damage they would immediately have newspapers reporting that. It's not like what they're doing is going to an area and cutting everything down. You have to rent land with forest on it for a fixed period – 30 years, say – and then you are only allowed to cut down certain trees."

Another thing that's important to Marcus is making sure his team get the credit they deserve. He tells me: "We have a lot of stars. I don't want to say that I'm the head; without my team I cannot work. We have Katja, who selects the woods, and does it much better than I can. She also takes care of the custom-shop instruments as they go through production. Then we have Thomas, the pre- production manager who organises everything. When a machine is broken he's there to repair it. Then we have Christopher who's the CNC and CAT programmer. We try to do as much as possible on the CNC router because it's much more accurate than a human being in certain ways. But when it comes to sanding jobs, we have Stefan and Libor, who are levelling frets and doing custom shop tweaks on the instruments, especially the necks. Michael makes things that you can't do with the CNC, for example special inlays. Sebastian is our sprayer, and then of course we have the assembly guys, Marcel and Mani. They've been doing their jobs for years. You can trust them."

"OUR EMPLOYEES ARE PROUD OF WHAT THEY'RE DOING, AND THEY DO IT WITH PASSION"

I ask Marcus how long the custom shop has been around. "That's a good question," he says. "I think since forever! In the beginning, when someone asked for special specs or a special inlay, we just did it. In that sense Warwick has always been a custom shop. Even on standard models we have four-strings, five-strings, six-strings, six-string broad-necks… That's how the custom shop was started. It was just normal.

"Although everybody thinks we are a big company with 1000 employees and so on, at the end of the day, our production here in Germany is a process involving 15 people. It's not big. Our employees are proud of what they're doing, and they do it with passion. I think it's very high end."

That kind of dedication comes at a price of course, which can sometimes be a problem for Warwick. "People ask 'Why does this instrument cost €6000?'" Marcus says. "But then you see the countless small changes and details – like the invisible frets that no other manufacturer is doing in a certain size, because they make no sense on a mass-production instrument. Also, certain things that we do with machines could be done faster by hand, but not so precisely."

I've learned a lot, but I have one last burning question: will there ever be a bass made from Parmesan cheese-scented wood?

"Yes, we are making one for a customer in Japan," confirms Marcus. "It will be a Streamer CV. The woods are in production, but we're starting right now."

www.warwickbass.com

"IT'S EASY TO OVERPLAY THINGS — BUT IT'S REALLY ABOUT LISTENING"

Feeling 'Phonic

The Stereophonics lifer on slap bass, the benefits of jury service – and stealing Britrock's greatest bass gig

Interview: Henry Yates

How did you get into playing bass?
I always had an affinity with the bass. I loved all the funky James Brown stuff from the 70s, even the disco stuff when I was a kid growing up in the 80s. I already knew I wanted to be in a band, but as soon as I heard Andy Fraser from Free – y'know, 'All Right Now' and 'Mr Big' – it was like, 'That's my place'. It was heavily competitive to play guitar around where we grew up, but there were only two or three bass players in the town. Kelly [Jones, guitar/vocals] and Stuart [Cable, late drummer] were already in a band, so I took over while the bass player was on holiday… and he's been on holiday ever since!

What was your first bass?
When I was 13, I had a milk round, so I saved up a couple of hundred quid and went down to Cranes Music in Cardiff. For some reason, my eyes settled on a Hohner fretless bass, ha ha! But it was a good starting-point for getting good ears, because to play along, you had to be in the right places. My first bass-line was 'Peter Gunn'. I'd keep on playing that over and over. I remember being up in my bedroom with my parents shouting up at me: "Learn something else…"

Do you play five- or six-string bass?
I play mainly four, but I do have a five-string and whenever a producer goes, 'We need something really low', I'll chuck it on there because it's far easier than detuning and what have you. There's been tracks like 'Superman' and 'Devil' – and I used the five-string on the track 'Sunny', too. That's got a real down-low feel.

Do you play slap bass?
I have a muck-around when we're jamming. I loved Flea growing up – so I like trying to emulate him and Les Claypool. But I'm not the best at it. When you're a musician, it's easy to overplay things – but it's really about listening to the vocals, the melody the drums and the rhythm – and finding something in-between so they all complement each other.

What gear do you use?
When I joined the Stereophonics, I had to do jury service with the local courts – and the good thing about jury service is that you can tell them you earn £500 a week and they pay your wages. I was there for three weeks and they gave me about £1600, so I borrowed £300 off my brother and bought a Wine Red Fender Jazz from about '92. When we were in New York for the first time, I bought a lovely '74 P-Bass too – because me and Kelly wanted to get a guitar from the year we were born. But my Yamaha BB P34 has the sound I've been after for God knows how long.

Who are your influences?
Number one would be Andy Fraser. Free were basically a three-piece with a vocalist who didn't play, and everything worked really well. He did a lot of the filling in and that kind of helped me when I joined Kelly and Stuart. That's what I had to do, too – fill in a lot of the spaces, because we were only a three-piece. That's why I loved Andy Fraser's groove – and he looked so cool in that Isle Of Wight footage. Numbers two and three would be a fight between Flea and John Entwistle. I like the way that Robert DeLeo from Stone Temple Pilots plays too. He's a real stylish player – he's very good with melodies.

www.stereophonics.com

Mo' Bass

The great Mo Foster, veteran of more sessions and shows than we've played wrong notes, updates us on what he's up to

Interview: Ray Walker **Photo:** Christina Jansen

"You have to remember, I can't recall what I did yesterday!" says a very cheerful Mo Foster as we settle down for a catch-up. This is far from the truth: Foster, no stranger to these pages, is perpetually cheerful, sharp as a tack and brimming with stories from his 50-plus years in the music business.

For Foster, 2019 will be all about his band, Mo Foster & Friends, which started in 2014 as a tribute to Gil Evans, George Gershwin and Jaco Pastorius. "I was able to get my hands on two of the original scores by Gil Evans from Gil's son," he says proudly. "I've been a fan of Gil's music since the mid-60s when I first heard his masterful collaborations with Miles Davis: *Miles Ahead*, *Porgy And Bess* and *Sketches Of Spain*."

He continues: "This band has been a long time coming. In 1983 I got a call while I was touring the USA with Phil Collins, inviting me to tour with the Gil Evans British Orchestra. It consisted mainly of luminaries from the UK jazz scene, including John Surman, Henry Lowther, Stan Sulzman, Ray Russell, John Taylor and John Marshall.

"Gil's world left such an impression on me that when I put together this new band, the sound I was aiming for was Evans in miniature: structured, with beautiful harmonies and melodies, and with room for great solos. I chose my dream team — Jim Watson, Chris Biscoe, Nic France, Ray Russell and Corrina Silvester — simply because they're the best. I've been waiting my whole life to play with them."

"I'm also doing lots of writing and producing," he adds. "I've produced an album for a singer called Linda Hoyle, who was the singer of my first band in London. I've also been busy recording library music, or production music, as it's known in the USA. It sits there until someone requests it; I've done one based on mandolin music and one on bass. If you're lucky, one gets picked up and used. It's my pension."

Foster's main bass is still a 1974 Fender Precision with a Badass bridge, Schecter hardware and an EMG bridge pickup. He also uses the Alembic Series 1 bass that was stolen and then returned to him after a 30-year absence, as we reported back in 2015.

As for amps, Mo is a Vanderkley cab owner since the last London Bass Guitar Show, but as he cheekily adds: "I'll use whatever anyone else will carry!

www.mofoster.com

STAR MAN

Shakira and Michael Bublé are just two of bassist Erik Kertes' major gigs. We find out how he approaches the big stages

Interview: Alison Richter **Photo:** Ian Spanier

It's ages old and often repeated: "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" asks a New York tourist of a passing gent. "Practice," the fellow responds. "Practice." Groan-worthy perhaps, but bassist, songwriter and producer Erik Kertes will tell you it's the truth.

Kertes, who plays upright and electric bass with Shakira, Michael Bublé, and a host of others, knows the importance of practice. It began with the piano lessons he hated as a child, continued as he learned to play guitar and bass at Los Angeles County High School For The Arts, and intensified while he was majoring in jazz studies at the University of Southern California. Practice has enabled Kertes to compose string quartets, record film scores, and transcribe without a bass in his hands.

Prior to rehearsals with Shakira, he dedicated three weeks to writing charts. "Not just the songs I knew we were going to do, but the songs I thought we might also do as well," he says. "Charting them out from her records, note for note, and then playing over them hundreds of times to get them under my fingers."

Kertes is on the A-list of touring and session players. His discography as a musician and songwriter reads like a who's who of top-tier artists in pop, rock, country, and jazz. He co-wrote several songs on Buble's latest Grammy-nominated album, including the title track and hit single, 'Nobody But Me'. He recently wrapped up his second solo EP, *Nitwit*, on which he plays all the instruments. He's also looking ahead to spring dates in Asia with Daniel Powter and the June launch of Shakira's world tour.

He could name "a million" bass players that inspire him, but his primary influences are narrowed to three. "My father was my first influence and still is," he says. "He plays bass, guitar, piano, violin, and mandolin. He still plays with the rock band that he's been in for almost 40 years, and in the Pasadena Community Orchestra. Music has always been a huge part of his life, and I think we have mutual admiration."

"I grew up on the Beatles, and it doesn't get better than Paul McCartney's melodic bass-lines. When I started playing upright, I quickly discovered Ray Brown, who played with Oscar Peterson. I spent my college years transcribing his bass-lines and solos, and it's the perfect, bluesy, quintessential bass. Paul is cool and polished, Ray has this greasy, groovy thing, and the combination of those is what I try to model myself after."

When you see Kertes onstage with Shakira this summer, he'll have his main basses, the Moollon P and J, plus a Fender American Series P-Bass, a five-string Yamaha BB, a Gibson 335, a Moog Sub 37 synth bass, an upright, and a cello. Of the last of these, he says "I've fallen in love with it. It's like upright bass, but a little bit easier because the spacing is not so huge between notes. It's been fun learning that instrument."

"I'm a vintage Fender guy," he adds. "That's always been my favourite stuff. Even though Shakira is a pop and Latin gig, the way she started was kind of rock, so it's cool to play a P-Bass with her because it helps define that underlying element of where she's come from, and we still do songs from the past where it's totally appropriate. I only play the five-string bass when I absolutely have to; when there's a note that's lower than E, I'll jump to the five-string. I play the P-Bass for everything else."

"I've always been a fan of the Ampeg SVT. That's been my go-to amp, but on both of the Shakira and Bublé gigs I've been using Aguilar, who I'm endorsed by. They get that SVT sound that I love so much, but they also can do the more modern thing, which is necessary when you're playing pop music."

Kertes's phone keeps ringing because he is well versed in all genres. That, of course, comes back to practice and keeping an open mind. "The bass is amazing," he says. "I could be biased, but it's just hearing what it can do on so many levels. And as we said, knowledge is power. If you can play all these styles of music, you're going to work that much more. As long as you're doing the homework, you can tackle as much as you want to in this world."

www.erikkertes.com

"MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF OZZY WAS THAT HE WAS NOT THE FULL SHILLING"

Getty

Diamond Geezer

Five decades since forming Black Sabbath with fellow founders Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi and Bill Ward, bassist Geezer Butler reflects on a legacy like no other and reveals what happens next…

Interview: Amit Sharma

Recorded on the final night of Black Sabbath's farewell tour in their hometown of Birmingham, last year's live release *The End Of The End* couldn't have been titled any more fittingly – it truly marks the end of an era. And what a wild ride it's been, one without which heavy metal may have never have existed at all, had not four young musicians stood across the road from their local cinema and wondered how to make their blues more terrifying. Fifty-two years on from that revelatory moment, bassist Geezer Butler takes us deep inside the heart of Sabbath's last stand and looks to the future…

What do you remember about Black Sabbath's final show on February 4, 2017, Geezer?
I treated it like any other show in Birmingham. I'm always especially nervous there – it's the band's home town, our families and friends are there, and I can almost feel the fans willing us to be good. We're representing the city, so there's that little extra pressure. It wasn't until the encore, 'Paranoid', that I felt relief that everything had gone to plan, there were no technical issues and the band had played particularly well.

The concert film also includes footage of you rehearsing after that last night. How did the idea come about?
I think that was Tony's idea. It gave us a chance to do songs that we wouldn't normally do in a set, or that had been dropped from the set along the way. Being in a small room again gave us a chance to talk about the final show, as we never had the chance to talk after the show, needing to spend time with our families and friends.

What were you plugged into for this final run?
I had a number of basses with me. There was a Lakland P-style with split pickups, a J-style with P-J pickups, another white Lakland, a gold one, my Aston Villa FC bass, as well as my first prototype. These were going into an Ashdown amp custom-built for me, recently released as the Head Of Doom – which is a very serious amp for players who want more control of their tone. I have two cab models built by Ampeg and St. Louis Music, one is a double 15 and the other is a quad 12. And I use four of each on stage, housed in specially made frames!

Do all those basses have your signature EMG pickups wired in?
Yes – these are actually one of the first which EMG have made with the pole pieces exposed, which I like for the vintage look. The sound is also of a vintage nature, with a nice rounded highs, and a rounded bottom on the low end, a scooped and boosted middle, for bass cut. The pickups work great for all kinds of music and sound good with all kinds of string types – as I use 105s in D tuning and 115s in both C and C#, the latter of which are my signature series made by DR Strings and come in black.

Beyond that, is it really just a wah pedal?
There's my own wah made by Dunlop, the Shure ULX-D wireless system with paddle antennas, my vegan straps – which, I might add, hold up to use better than real leather – and that's it.

It must seem light-years away from using old strings, a Laney guitar head and broken Park cab as you did on the debut…
It's amazing how well that first record [*Black Sabbath*, 1970] sounds. I think the bass sound on those early albums is what I strive to get back to… even now! But I think it's more about the feel and technique rather than the gear I play through.

You were originally a rhythm guitarist in the Rare Breed with Ozzy. What were your first impressions of each other?
My first impression of Ozzy was that he was not the full shilling, as we used to say back then. I'd seen his 'Ozzy Zig Needs Gig' advert in the local

Getty

musical instruments store and noticed he lived a few streets away from me in Aston. I went around to his house, but he wasn't in. Later that day, there was a knock on the door and my brother said 'There's someone asking for you'. I opened the door and there was this skinhead, with a factory gown on, no shoes or socks, a chimney brush over his shoulder and a sneaker on a dog lead. He was perfect for my band… I later switched to bass when we joined up with Tony and Bill. At that time, we were a six-piece, there was already another guitarist and a sax player – so I switched to bass, being the least proficient guitarist in the band.

And before you owned an actual bass, you used a detuned Telecaster guitar.
When we started rehearsing, as the Polka Tulk Blues Band, I tuned down my Telecaster and used it as a bass. I can't imagine now what that must have sounded like, the rest of the band must have had great patience! I borrowed a bass on the way to our first gig from the bass player in the Rare Breed. It only had three strings, but it was a damn sight better than using the Telecaster.

You learned how to play very quickly.
I don't class myself as a great bass player, but I do credit Tony and Bill with providing the inspiration for me to play as well as I can. They were and still are very accomplished musicians. I can only thank them for having the patience and giving me the encouragement while I was teaching myself to play bass. I think the biggest mistake is trying to do too much too soon.

You've often cited Jack Bruce as a primary influence. Is that why you've always bent your strings more like a lead guitar player?"
Cream were my favourite band to see live, they were great musicians and I loved their albums. I saw them every time they played in Birmingham, three times in all, and I actually had a drink with Clapton in the bar at the Swan in Yardley. This was before Sabbath, of course, and I was just a fan at that time, so I felt very privileged to talk to one of my heroes. I loved watching Jack Bruce, I'd never seen a bass being played like that.

And who impresses you out of the younger bands?
I really like Mike Kerr from Royal Blood. I think what he is doing is both innovative and listenable, which aren't necessarily mutual. I like the way he can build great songs around his bass-lines… brilliant.

Which are the toughest Sabbath songs to play?
I've got to a point where nothing in the Sabbath catalogue is challenging for me, at least that I can think of. The only tip I can give is to practise as often and as much as possible, and have patience. Nobody is great from day one.

Have you always played fingerstyle?
I used a pick on some of the GZR solo albums to give a more aggressive feel and sound to the songs, which were themselves very aggressive in nature. Some of the songs, such as 'House Of Clouds', were so fast that I couldn't get clarity using just my fingers – so I went with the pick.

Which were the wildest recording sessions for Sabbath?
We only started using drugs while recording *Vol. 4* [1972] onwards. The first few albums were recorded reasonably straight, maybe a few joints were smoked. The serious stuff was imbibed when we recorded that one in LA… and then later on *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* [1973]. None of it made me play better. I'd think so at the time – then when listening to it back sober, I'd have to re-do everything. Alcohol is by far the worst for performing. I only ever did that once, and that was enough.

Now that touring with Sabbath is over, what do you plan to do with your time?
I will mainly be spending time with my family, dogs and cats – and probably doing lots of tourist-type travelling. Of course, I'll be writing ideas for songs, which may or may not ever be heard publicly. I just enjoy experimenting in my home studio.

There is some good news in that Sabbath are still open to one-off shows in the future. If you were a betting man, when do you see that happening?
I'm totally resigned to the fact that Sabbath is over… except for its legacy..

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EQUIPMENT

BASSES (all Lakland) Geezer Butler Signature (P pickups), Geezer Butler Signature (w/EMG PJ pickups), USA Series 44-51M ("Birthday"), USA Series 44-64 ("Goldie"), USA Series 44-64 ("Old #1"), USA Series 44-51M ("Aston Villa"), Custom/Prototype USA "EBOstyle"
RIG Ashdown ABMRPM-GZR Custom Bass preamp, Ashdown ABM APM EVO II power amplifier, custom-built Ampeg 4x12 and 2x15 with Electro-Voice speakers
STRINGS DR Strings K3 Black Beauties (.050–.110)
STRAP Heavy Leather NYC Geezer Butler Signature Strap
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Ray Of Hope

The extraordinary Randy Hope-Taylor has played the world's stages with Incognito, Jeff Beck, A-Ha and a stellar cast of musicians. We meet the man for a look back and forward

Interview: Joel McIver **Photograph:** Charlie Thornton, The Gallery

What are you up to these days, Randy?
The last high-profile gig that I did was with Jeff Beck in 2004. That was a great band to be with – Vinnie Colaiuta on drums, Jason Rebello on keyboards, Jeff and myself. The first time I worked with Jeff, he had another guitarist, Jennifer Batten, who did all the MIDI work and emulated the keyboards. The drummer then was Steve Alexander, who got me involved. Pino Palladino was doing the bass at the time, but he was in and out of Jeff's band. He went off to play with D'Angelo, and at that point the doors opened for me. I stayed with Jeff until '04, when I became a dad again and decided to stay home. My wife is a schoolteacher and wasn't at home, and we already had a little girl who I missed, so when my son was born I ended up playing bass in church, which is what I continue to do now.

How did you get into bass?
I was born in London, but my parents were from Barbados and they relocated there when I was 15. I spent three years there. While there, I was heavily influenced by American music because of the military bases on the island. I started out as a singer, but I thought it would be nice to play bass, so I took a six-string guitar, spaced out four of the strings and tried to play bass that way. I would learn bass parts, even though I couldn't physically play them. When I finally got my hands on a bass around 1973, which was a Fender Mustang, the strings felt like cables!

Why did you move back to London?
I had known I wanted to be a musician since I was five years old, and I knew I needed to be back in London to make that happen. My first gig back in the UK was as a guitarist, but I knew I was lacking in skill so I picked up a bass, which was easier although I didn't know any scales or anything. From the age of 18, I never looked back.

What music influenced you?
I liked Steely Dan, James Taylor, Motown, Trojan Records, Herbie Hancock and Earth, Wind & Fire. The first album that I ever bought was *Fresh* by Sly & The Family Stone.

Did you learn music theory?
Everything I've done has been by ear; I've only started to get into theory in the last five years. I was very good at remembering things, and recognising rhythms by ear. I could also read chord charts. Most of my sessions didn't call for reading music, although I think now that I probably missed out on a lot of theatre work because I couldn't read.

What was your first major gig?
The first high-profile gig I ever did was with Five Star. I did two tours with them, and then I did DC Lee, Matt Bianco and A-Ha, who I toured with for a year and a half in 1988 to '89. I was asked to do a third tour with Five Star, but something in me said no, and I'm glad about that because there were complications and the tour was cancelled.

You played with a whole series of big names.
Yes, especially when I recorded with Martyn Ware [producer, Heaven 17] and his B.E.F. Project's second album [*Music Of Quality And Distinction Volume Two*, 1991], which had Chaka Khan and Lalah Hathaway on it. It was so nice to work with these people and have them on my CV. Then there was Jocelyn Brown, Mica Paris, and then Incognito, who I toured and recorded albums with for eight years. At one point I did a couple of recordings with Jamiroquai, before Paul Turner joined them. He's a good friend of mine and an incredible bassist.

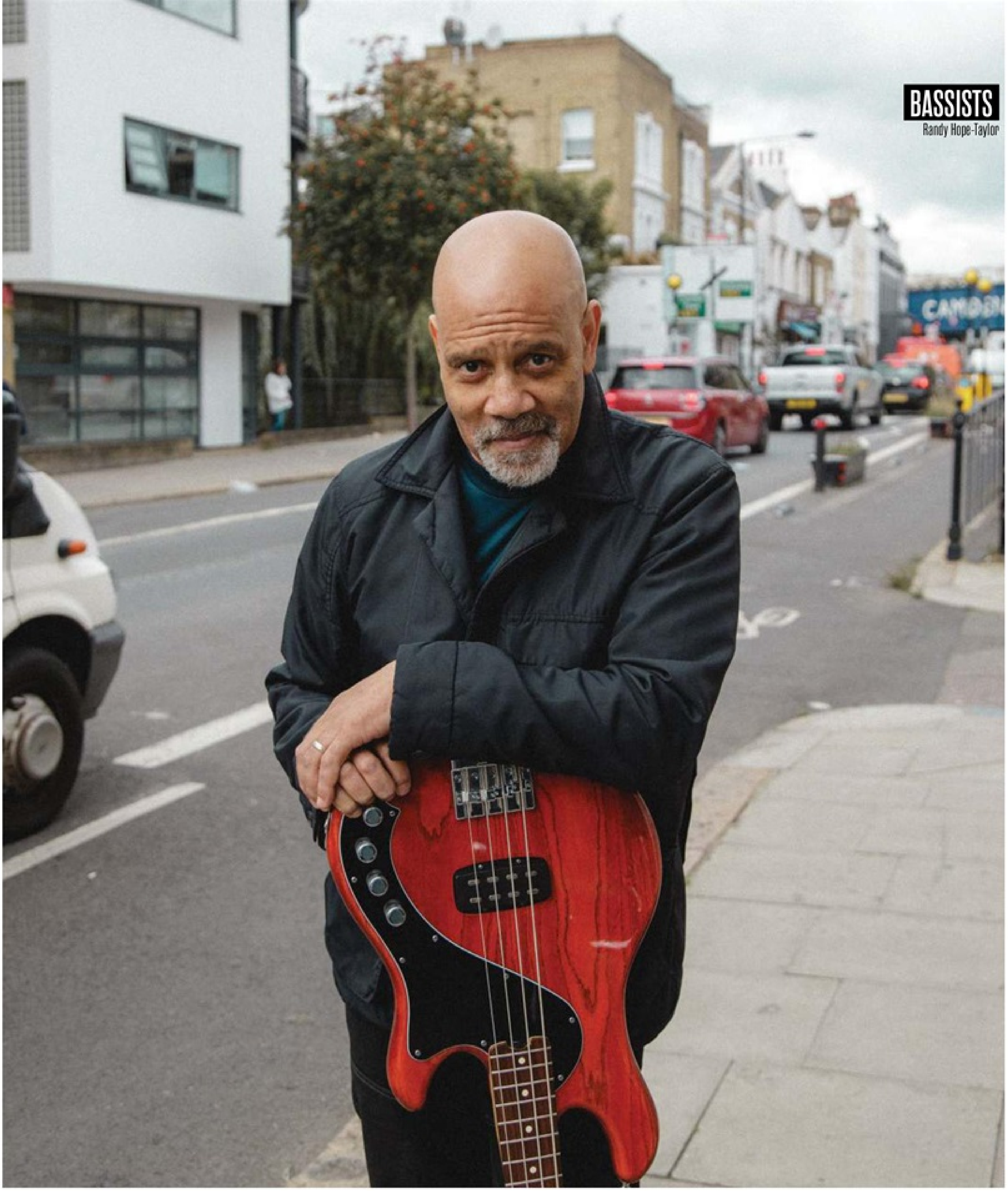
> "IN CHURCH MUSIC, THE IDEA IS TO GO WITH THE FLOW"

How did Incognito come about?
One of the first drummers that I met was Trevor Murrell, who went on to work with Wham! He introduced me to the Foundations, who were one of the first bands that I ever worked with. We both then moved on to [renowned soul band] Gonzalez, and that's when I met Bluey [aka Jean-Paul Maunick, bandleader], who had recorded the first Incognito album with the late, great Paul 'Tubbs' Williams on bass guitar. Not too long after that, Bluey and I started working together.

You were a fixture on the UK soul scene for a long time.
True, but I didn't want to be seen just as a soul and funk player. I liked the idea of stadium gigs too, and that opportunity came with Jeff Beck. It was a privilege to have toured with one of the players from that generation.

Do you miss being on the road?
No, because I wanted to spend more time with my family, and I still do. I do miss being in a rehearsal room with a bunch of musicians, taking the time to learn things, and I've played with function bands and so on, but last year I decided that I was done with that. I enjoy the church stuff, and anyway, I look at some of the young bassists now, and they have a lot of techniques that I find very inspiring.

How does playing church music differ from being in a conventional band?
In every performance within a service, the musicians have to be spiritually alert and responsive. At the Pentecostal church, it's all to do with what we call the moving of the Holy Spirit. The idea is to go with the flow of the Spirit, because anything can happen. You need to know your instrument and you need to know how to move with the flow.



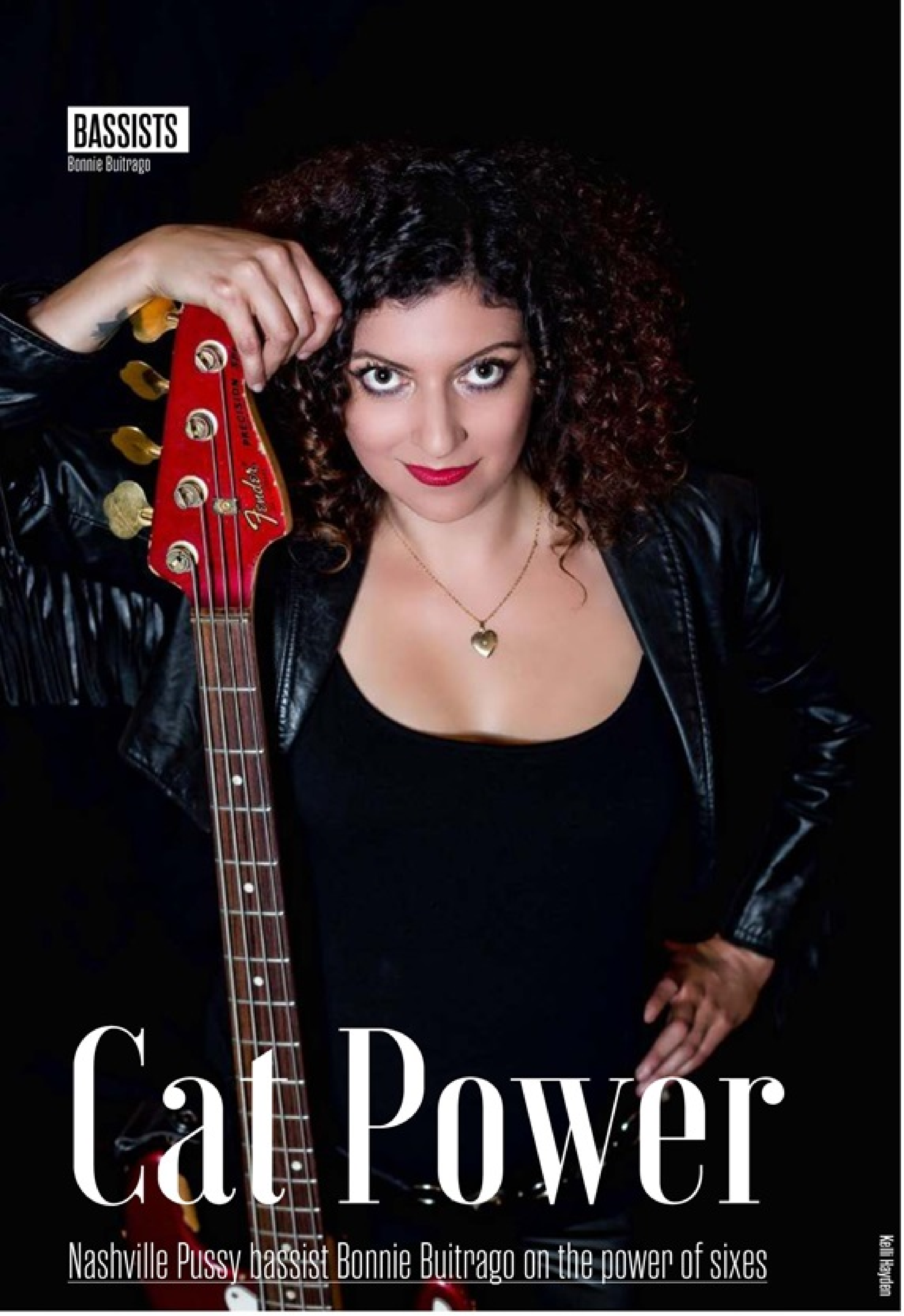
What gear are you using these days?
I'm using EBS for backline in church, and Neil Whitcher [head of A&R] at Fender has been very good to me. I play Fender Dimension and Jazz basses, and Nathan East's signature Yamaha five-string, which I tune down to low A. I also use a Roland GR55 synth unit; I used that on a lot of dance music for a while. My strings are Dunlop Super Brights — I'd like to send my gratitude to Darryl C. Anders for those.

How has your tone changed over the years?
In Incognito it was mainly Fender Jazz basses; that was what I was known for. I endorsed Hartke, and then Eden, but as I've gotten older, my concept of sound has changed because of the music I'm playing. In gospel music, the bass should sit really low but still be full.

Do you prefer to have a range of tones?
Personally, when I move from playing slap to fingerstyle, I prefer the tone to stay the same; I don't want to be flicking switches. I like to have a high, sweet top end, a punchy low end, and the mids almost like a synth bass. That's developed over the last five years for me. I feel better for it; I can hear myself more clearly. You need a tone that works for the band, rather than the one you want for yourself.

There's a lesson there for all of us.
Well, if I've influenced people and made them comfortable, I'm very happy with that. I love passing on what I've learned to my son and daughter, as well as to other young people. I'm very thankful that I've been able to achieve what I've achieved.

Contact: randyhopetaylor@gmail.com



Kelli Hayden

Cat Power

Nashville Pussy bassist Bonnie Buitrago on the power of sixes

I started off playing guitar in my bedroom like a lot of soon-to-be bassists, but as I started playing with bands, I found myself in love with playing bass and singing. I wound up working with some incredible audio engineers and producers, who showed me that bass was my calling. I got to spend lots of time recording and finding my voice.

My first bass was a vintage short scale sunburst Teisco knock-off, no-brand. I still have it – it actually sounds pretty great. I got to have fun with it recording at Scott Reeder's studio, the Sanctuary, out in the California desert. Among all his monstrous bass amps and arsenal of bass guitars, we mic'd up my first bass amp, and plugged in my first bass. I brought that gear to his studio because I knew the heavy, overdriven fuzz bursting out of my old, torn-up five-watt Japanese amp, plus that bass, was gonna provide the perfect gnarly touch on some overdubs I had in mind. My main bass sounds were coming from the Ampeg SVT, which was used on [1994 Kyuss album] *Welcome To Sky Valley*, and some of his other amazing amps, of course.

I'm most known for my work with Nashville Pussy, touring internationally with them for the last seven years, and having recorded on their last three releases – *Up The Dosage, Ten Years Of Pussy* and our new album, *Pleased To Eat You*. I came from the underground punk world prior to that, touring alongside legendary punk bands around the US and Europe with my band Bloodhook before I joined Nashville Pussy. We had a self-titled album recorded at Sound City with Sonics drummer Dusty Watson. Touring on the ZZ Top/Nashville Pussy tour in 2012 will forever be a highlight for me. And I got to join one of my favourite bands ever!

Fender have been great with me, going beyond what I could expect. I bought a vintage P-Bass on the road one time, and it didn't have a case. My birthday was that week and when I arrived at my hotel room, I opened the door and there was a box from Fender with a new case and a note that said 'Happy Birthday'! Ernie Ball too; they had me on their radar before I started playing in Nashville Pussy. I'm grateful for all their support.

I love my 1962 Olympic White Fender Bass VI. If you're unfamiliar with them, you might mistake the VI for a baritone guitar. It's not. It's a six-string bass, in standard tuning, but one octave lower. The VI has a 30" scale and requires its own special strings. Depending on what I'm going for, I might sprinkle it into small parts of a song, or use it straight-up for the whole bass track. It's got a characteristic sound all of its own; it can sound like the darkest surf guitar, as it has a tremolo bar too, but it's unmistakably a VI in any form. It's really all about how you choose to use it. When I found mine in the back of a local gear shop a long time ago, I felt like I'd found a treasure… I still do.

Bass-lines can be incredible if they are driving and simple, or wild, non-stop jammin'… that's the beauty of bass. It can be all about anchoring the song down with fewer notes – that space, that silence – or showing off artistically with the most out-of-this-world bass playing. Then there's the songwriting bassist, who thinks differently to most of us, choosing wisely for the vocal parts, as they're building the song from the bottom up, constructing the melody on top. My favourite bassists come from all these worlds. What matters is that you play from the heart; it doesn't matter if you're walking all over the neck or holding it steady, you're the pulse of the song. Good tone feels good – for everybody involved!

> "I GOT TO JOIN ONE OF MY FAVOURITE BANDS EVER!"

My favourite bass ever is my trusty, slightly rusty 1981 Candy Apple red Fender Precision Special. It's on all the Nashville Pussy albums I've done, and always on tour with me. She's lived a punk rock life: scorched by the sun, sweated and bled on, marinated with beer. And she's got all the scars to prove it – she's a trooper! The second place runner is my indestructible Peavey T-40, which I use when playing in drop tunings. I originally got it as a cheap backup for my Rickenbacker 4003 – but the T-40 is another proven punk rock beast, and not to be messed with…

Nashville Pussy's album *Pleased To Eat You* is out now.
www.bonniebuitrago.com.

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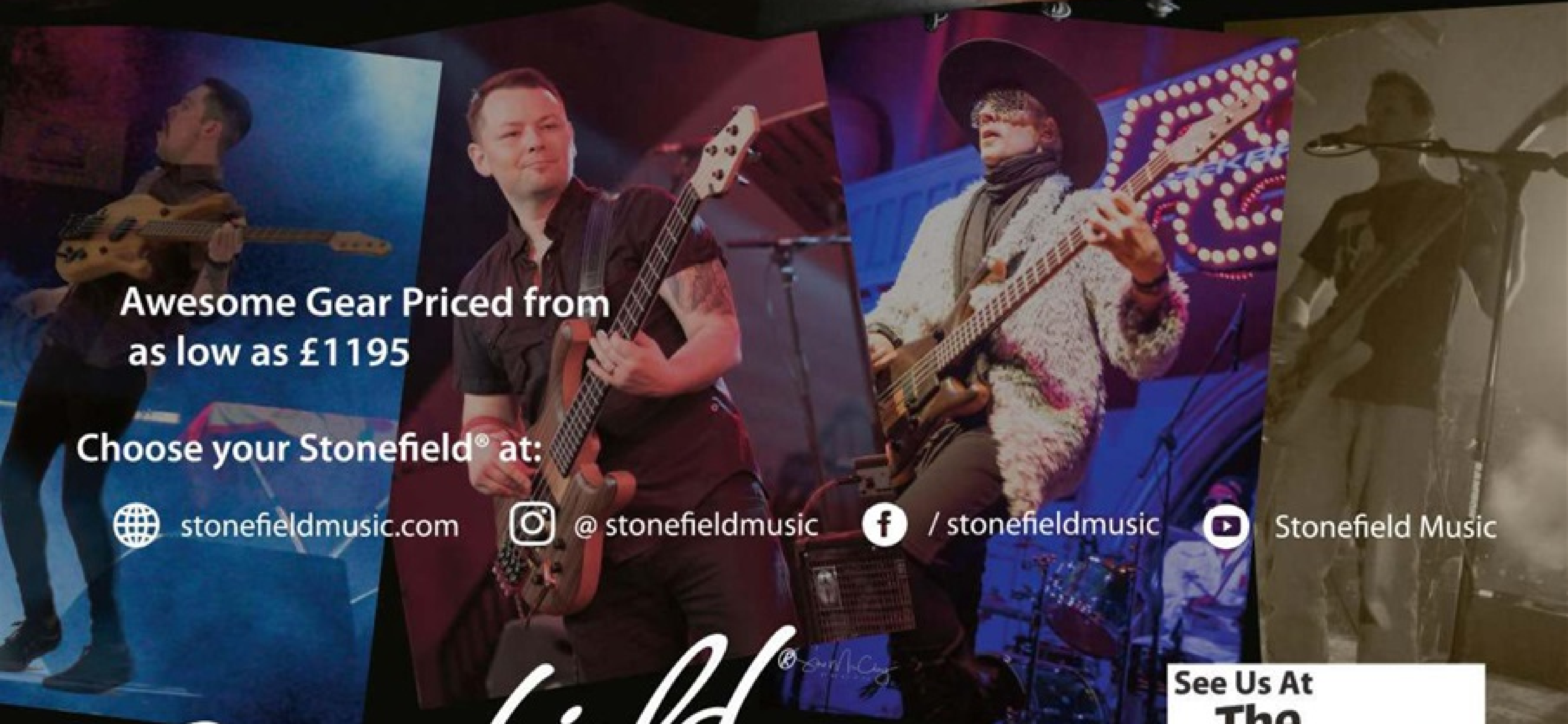

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Magic Mike

Mike Poggione of death metal merchants Monstrosity considers the heavy stuff

I started playing bass around the age of 15. A bassist was unable to attend a concert for the school pep rally, so I filled in that day and realised just how much I enjoyed playing bass – mostly due to the low impact and feeling the bass vibration of the speakers. I was hooked on the low end!

My professional career began around 1998 when I moved to Tampa, Florida and joined a band called Execration. In 1999 I joined the legendary Monstrosity, whose bass player was unable to continue with the band. They continue to be my main activity, but I've been very fortunate to work with many other groups and other session musicians. I played with Trivium around 2004, and supported them for their first tour; I played bass for a super-technical group named Capharnaum which featured Matt Heafy from Trivium on vocals and the guitar player from Gorguts and Voivod.

Around 2006 I joined Lecherous Nocturne, which featured members of Nile at that time. Over the past five years I've done plenty of recordings and session work, including the Autumn Offering, Serocs, Doomsilla and the group Skinned, which toured Europe, Nepal, India and south Asia. This coming year I will have a variety of releases coming out; each one will feature some of the best musicians in today's underground metal scene. I've been very fortunate to travel throughout the world for over 20 years in support of different types of extreme metal. Sometimes I sit back and think about when I was just a teenager jamming with my friends, always aspiring to do something good in today's metal scene, and I'm really appreciative of how it's worked out.

I work exclusively with Spector and Darkglass. I've always been a fan of Ibanez, but at the moment I'm very happy with my Spector Euro 6XL. I started on a five-string but in general play six, although I do have a few prior endorsements with seven-string basses. The extended range of the low F# can make a dramatic difference at times in regards to the low end and impact of the bass. But in general, I prefer a six, and yes, I do play all the strings all the time... they're not just for looks!

Slap bass is something I'm working on. I won't lie... I have the technical capability to execute a variety of slapping techniques, however I don't utilise it in my playing style at the moment. I'm trying to find a way to incorporate these different styles and rhythmic percussions into extreme metal. The secret of playing bass well is practice. If you're sitting on the couch watching TV, you might as well have your bass in your hands, focusing on technique.

My bass heroes are Alex Webster, Jeff Hughell and Erlend Casperen in death metal, but John Patitucci, Victor Wooten, Steve Bailey and Billy Sheehan are gods to me as well. Imagine a world without bass! I can't even fathom the idea...

Monstrosity's new album The Passage Of Existence is out now on Metal Blade. Info: www.facebook.com/mjpbass.

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We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

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FENDER
American Original Precisions and Jazz

Three classic Fenders, reviewed by Jonathan Herrera. Do they cut the retro mustard? Let's find out...

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Among big-ticket builders of bass guitars, no manufacturer has better capitalised on its heritage than Fender. After surviving an array of mis-steps (the much-maligned sale to CBS comes to mind), weathering a few miscalculated brand acquisitions, and doling out some unfortunately second-rate designs, Fender is now thriving once again. It's clearly realised that its best shot at success lies in leveraging its natural strengths.

For Fender's bass division, those strengths are the perfection of Leo Fender's foundational designs, the Precision and Jazz Bass. The American Original basses are Fender's latest elaboration of these iconic models, each designed to manifest the most critical features of its decade namesake. Sorting out how these models fit into Fender's convoluted line-up, not to mention its similar legacy offerings, warrants a feature of its own. Suffice it to say, they're all high-end, American-made P- and J-Basses with a ton of vintage flair and undeniable appeal.

Each of the basses reviewed here has an attention to period-appropriate detail that ought to beguile Fender fanatics. They all sport the finish their decade dictates: nitrocellulose lacquer for the 50s P and 60s J and a thicker, more durable poly-blend for the 70s bass. Period-accurate pickups come as standard, as do era-specific neck profiles. A more contemporary 9.5" radius is common to all the American Original basses, but the neck profiles vary widely by decade, with the baseball-bat-thick 50s Precision being an especially glaring example of how much fashions change. Speaking of changing fashions, the basses come with chrome pickup and bridge covers – aka ashtrays, doorstops, or those things you keep around for some reason but never actually use.

Build Quality

As they're all born of Fender's exceptionally competent US manufacturing facility, it's no surprise that these basses' construction is flawless. While CNC manufacturing has enabled excellent quality control and precise shaping on even low-cost imports, there is still no denying the expertise that shines through from these bulletproof siblings. The finishes have been faultlessly applied; hardware is robust and rattle-free; and the fretwork and body contours are impeccable. None of this should be remarkable, though. These days, there's no excuse for a $2,000 bolt-on Fender (or Fender-style) bass to be anything other than perfectly made.

A peek into the basses' control cavities reveals tidy workaday wiring, much like you'd find in a real vintage example. Kudos to Fender for sourcing cloth-covered wire. It makes no difference to the instruments' tone, but when you spend real money on a vintage-style bass, it's the little details like this that really count.

Sounds And Playability

I recall once hearing a fascinating public radio story about a canonical perfume critic. For decades, he went about his olfactory occupation by describing scents in lurid purple prose, boundlessly extolling each one's singular smell with such gusto that the original subject would be subsumed into evocative strata of metaphor, tangent, and discursion. Faced with his task, you or I might say: 'It smells like flowers', or 'It's nice', or 'I don't know honey, get the one you like'.

Oh, that I could have this man's gift, because what we have here are quite literally the most basic basses imaginable. Vintage-style Precision and Jazz basses don't have ancestral DNA in them, they *are* the ancestral DNA. For that reason, and for the reason that I've likely reviewed over 100 similar basses in my career, I'm left longing for that long-dead perfume critic's gift of gab. All that said, the question for a P- or J-Bass is more one of what it may lack. Are these instruments worthy claimants of their birthright? In short, yes.

Each bass goes above and beyond in order to successfully evoke the vibe, spirit and tone of its namesake decade. The 50s Precision is the ultimate meat-and-potatoes bass, with a thick and chewy depth that it would be impossible to make sound bad in any mix. Sure, its chunky neck and limited upper-register access makes certain techniques hard, but if that's a problem for you, you're missing the point entirely. You, my friend, might find yourself more at home with one of the Jazz basses. The 60s has a richer and more well-textured midrange, with a delicate and dynamically sensitive tone.

The 70s bass, while not far removed from its 60s sibling, has the slightly more hollow and aggressive sound that was once associated with genres like disco that put the bass higher in the mix. This authentic reproduction of tone isn't surprising given the bass's period-appropriate wood selection and bridge-pickup placement. All in all, each instrument acquits itself beautifully.

Conclusion

The American Original basses are a singular blend of new and old. Each benefits from modern production and consistency, but each also encapsulates the best of the instruments' iconic heritage. In that sense, they're like a remastered Fender Greatest Hits collection. Not better than the original, just newer and cleaner.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | 50s Precision, £1,449; 60s Jazz, £1,599 70s Jazz, £1,599
Made In | USA
Body | 50s Precision and 60s Jazz, alder; 70s Jazz, ash
Finish | 50s Precision and 60s Jazz, nitrocellulose lacquer; 70s Jazz, polyurethane blend
Neck Maple, 20 frets
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four bolts
Nut Width | 50s Precision/60s Jazz, 1.73" / 44mm, 70s Jazz, 1.5" / 37mm
Fingerboard | 50s Precision and 70s Jazz, maple; 60s Jazz, rosewood
Pickups | All Fender: Precision, Pure Vintage 58 P; 60s Jazz, Pure Vintage 64 J; 70s Jazz, Pure Vintage 75 J
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Precisions: volume, tone; Jazz: volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Fender 'Vintage-correct'
Weight | 50s Precision, 4.3 kg / 9.3 lb; 60s Jazz, 4.4 kg / 9.7 lb; 70s Jazz, 4.4 kg / 9.7 lb
Left-hand available? | No
Case/gig bag included | Case

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Pitch-perfect, playable homages to Fender's iconic heritage
Minus | They don't come cheap, and there are equally well constructed alternatives for less money out there
Overall | The American Original basses represent the best Fender designs well, blending key features of the originals with contemporary construction and quality control

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
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Fodera's entry point is everyone else's 'bells and whistles' region, so what happens when Mike Brooks investigates this affordable-but-expensive single-coiler?

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www.bassdirect.co.uk

£3579

You have to hand it to the team at Fodera; even with their famously high pricetags, their instruments have never been more visible and prevalent. On the rare occasion that Fodera owners sell their prized possession, it's often simply because they're upgrading to a pricier version of the same brand. Of course, notable endorsees such as Victor Wooten have done much to bring the brand to widespread recognition, but it's something of a surprise to see an instrument such as this, essentially a passive Jazz bass, under the Fodera moniker and at "only" £3500 or so.

Build Quality

Cast your eye from top to bottom. The trademark headstock shape remains, as does the butterfly graphic (although the mother-of-pearl inlay is absent). Chrome hardware has been used throughout, with Fodera machine heads, a brass nut and a Fodera bridge that facilitates action, intonation and string spacing adjustments. String spacing is set at 20mm on this example.

The three-tone sunburst alder body is finished in a gloss lacquer, with the timber grain showing through, while the three-piece maple neck has had a satin lacquer applied, providing a sleek finish. The traditional vibe is completed with a tortoiseshell scratchplate and the deep lower cutaway offers perfect access to the upper regions of the 22-fret pau ferro fingerboard. Front and rear contours offer the player some additional comfort.

At the point of attachment, the four-bolt neck joint is sculpted for improved playability, while the neck pocket is tight and secure with no visible gaps – as you would expect of an instrument of this calibre. Truss rod access is accomplished at the base of the neck. The instrument's setup and finishing are near perfect; the G string is a little high and there is some headstock bias, but the neck profile, nut width and string tension make for an almost effortless level of comfort and playability. The control set is simple (volume, volume, tone) and all three pots are tightly secured and operate smoothly.

The same can be said of the machine heads. White position markers have been used on the front and side of the neck and recessed strap locks are pre-installed.

Sounds And Playability

The alder, maple and pau ferro combination give this bass a fairly flat response – and although there is evidence of a natural spring to the instrument's natural unplugged character, it would seem that the sum of the parts is geared towards how the bass sounds when plugged in. Without any active circuitry to call upon, the Seymour Duncan single-coils obviously have a fair degree of ground to cover.

Plugged in, the pickups provide the signature tones you would expect; they certainly don't lack punch or clarity. The bottom end is full and forthright with a warm but detailed response, so whether you prefer to play over the bridge or neck pickup, or at a sweet spot somewhere in between, the bass produces a full and pleasing tone. As you would expect, the bridge pickup offers up a lot of midrange honk, and opening up the tone control gives the tone a notable bark with some additional grit. The tone control operates across the whole turn, although the volume controls only provide a noticeable change in output across the last two-thirds of their respective turn.

The bass is certainly playable, and in terms of comfort it fares very well – but you do begin to question if it has the wow factor that you expect at this price. Sure, it's a very good instrument, but it's not an exceptional one. I wanted to be blown away, and I was not.

Conclusion

Quality doesn't come cheap, and this is a fine instrument, it has to be said. Whether it has enough to entice those with a casual interest in the name, compared to the already converted, we will have to see. At a snip under £3600, it faces major competition. The upside to all this is that Fodera basses are now more attainable – and that can only be a good thing.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | £3579
Made In | USA
Colour | Three-tone sunburst, gloss finish
Body | Alder
Neck | Three-piece maple, 34" scale
Neck join | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 40mm
Fingerboard | Pau ferro
Frets | 22
Pickups | Seymour Duncan single-coil pickups x 2
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Fodera bridge, Fodera machine heads
Weight | 3.9kg / 8.6 lbs
Left-hand available? | Yes, as a custom order
Case/gigbag | Fodera hardcase

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great playability, high-quality passive tones
Minus | Doesn't exactly bowl you over
Overall | A fine single-coil-equipped passive bass – but is that enough?

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

HAGSTROM
Super Swede

It's ABBA-out time this luxurious Scandinavian bass design was reissued, says Joel McIver

Rosetti
www.rosetti.co.uk

£1029

Swedish luthiers Hagstrom made guitars and basses domestically from the 1950s to 1983, before going on hiatus for a couple of decades and then re-emerging as a Chinese-built brand. One of the last bass models produced in Sweden was the Super Swede, a collaborative design rustled up in 1980 between designer Per-Åke Olsson and the great (and now sadly late) ABBA bassist Rutger Gunnarsson.

If, like so many of us, you've dismissed ABBA's music as throwaway fluff for people of little taste and discernment, you need to think again – if only for the sake of Gunnarsson's phenomenal bass playing. Seek out 'Mamma Mia' if you don't believe me; yes, the title reeks of tedious rom-coms, but the slinky feel, expert control and creamy tone of that busy line make it essential in our world. Gunnarsson played the original Super Swede (of which only 364 were made) on ABBA's final North American tour in September and October 1979, and frankly, we wish we'd been there.

Build Quality

All this leads us neatly to the new, reissued Super Swede, a passive, neck-through, all-mahogany job which you can nab for just over a grand. It's solid as a rock, reassuringly; a Resinator wood composite fingerboard feels like actual wood, perhaps ebony, and the headstock and those crazy tuners are both massive in that old, we-don't-care-about-balance way that classic headed bass designs always have. Even the three controls are heavy and turn with palpable authority, if such a thing can be said about a lump of plastic.

The neck has a deep D profile, the frets are medium jumbo (no messing about), the input jack is proudly stuck on the front (where else?) and there are 20 frets (why would you need more?). The design isn't completely old-school, though; the bridge has modern individual saddles, and the pickups, which initially resemble single-coils, are Hagstrom's own humbuckers. These are recessed into the centre block, with a long shelf from neck to bridge serving as a flexible thumb rest. I've always liked a thumb rest on a bass; after all, we modulate tone with our plucking position, so why not give your thumb some choices about where to sit?

Sounds And Playability

By the beards of Bjorn and Benny, the sustain on this bass is nuts. Thanks to the Resinator board and the fact that the strings anchor to that giant centre block without the inconvenience of a bolt-on neck joint to get in the way, your notes sing for ages. Not that massive sustain was necessarily a feature of any ABBA bass part, of course, but it's still a useful sonic feature to have at your disposal.

The one-volume-per-pickup system deployed here means that you can accidentally switch the bass off if you're not careful, but unless you're "herbally refreshed" that shouldn't be too frequent an occurrence. Roll off the rear pickup and you have a front unit that ranges from muffled to punchy; you'll need to ease on a bit of the bridge pickup if you want to come close to Gunnarsson's sound. Alternatively you can focus on the rear unit completely for a tighter, snappier tone; there's a reasonable amount of high end if you need it, although you won't get any of the scintillating treble of modern designs. Employ slap and pop with care, then.

The Super Swede is very playable, we're pleased to report, despite its relatively chunky neck. You won't have too much difficulty flying up and down the board, although again, that was hardly Gunnarsson's main aim. Strength and reliability are clearly at the top of the list of priorities here.

Conclusion

Thumbs up for the Super Swede from us. Whether this luxurious (if rather pricey) instrument is for you depends wholly on your taste for classic designs. Tonally and electronically, this is not a progressive bass; it's there to celebrate the vintage work of a departed legend. If solidity and value for money are on your agenda, give the Super Swede a spin; if you're after flash, look elsewhere.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

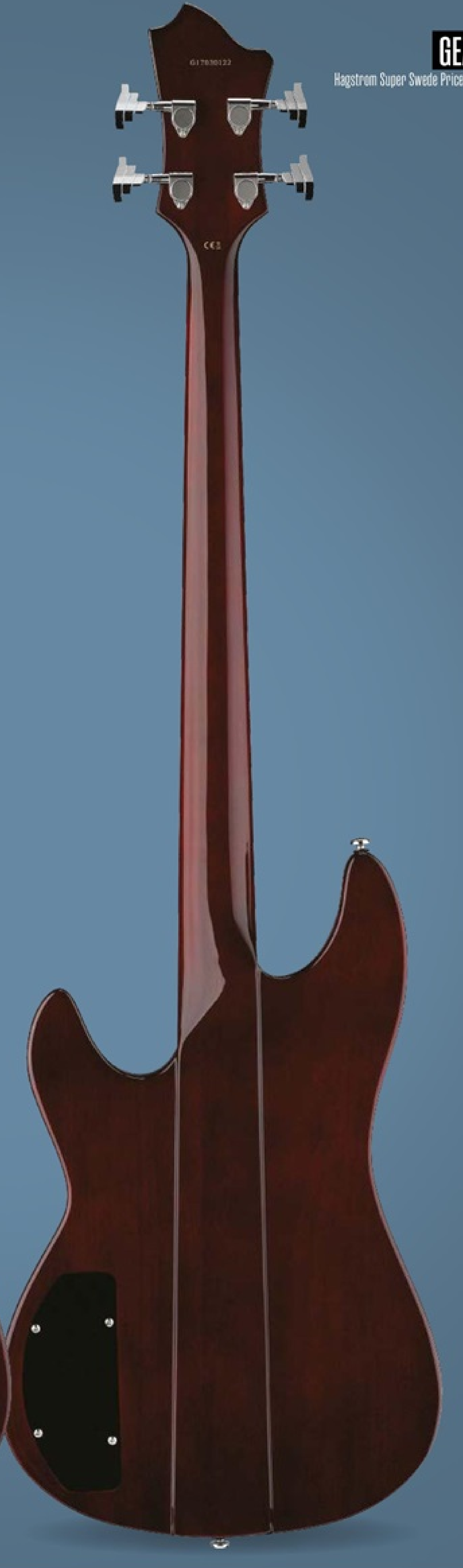
Price | £1029
Made In | China
Body | Mahogany
Neck | Mahogany, 34" scale
Neck Join | Neck-through
Fingerboard | Resinator, 20 medium jumbo frets
Pickups | 2 x Hagstrom Design J-Quad quad-stacked humbuckers
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Hagstrom
Weight | 3.2 kg / 7 lbs
Left-hand available | No
Case/gigbag included | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Solid feel, highly playable, classic status
Minus | It's pretty trad; modernists may not like it
Overall | A grand's worth of bass that feels like it. Recommended

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■□□□



ACG
Retro B J4

A gift for the masses from the workbench of AC Guitars…
Mike Brooks takes a look under the bonnet

AC Guitars
www.acguitars.co.uk

£1975

Much as they might try to avoid the most popular bass design on the planet, most luthiers eventually succumb to the charms of the Fender Jazz style. However, not every instrument influenced by the Jazz has to copy its every feature; smart designers can still come up with new variations on the classic template, while appealing to the legions of players who admire it. With the Retro B J4 luthier Alan Cringean has attempted to come up with a bass that should appeal to both Jazz fans and those looking for a bass that's great on its own merits.

Build Quality

With an alder body core and a figured maple top that transitions from green to purple, the new ACG is a guaranteed eye-catcher. The exposed upper bout and contour provide a hint at the underlying timber, and the contrast between the body top and the pale bleached maple fingerboard is striking. The offset body shape feels familiar – but without a scratchplate and chrome control detail, the bass looks and feels somehow cleaner. The rear contour ensures that the bass fits snugly against the player's body, while the cutaways offer good access to the acrylic impregnated 22-fret fingerboard.

Finished in a satin lacquer, the instrument has a smooth, soft feel that belies its solidity – that's 'solidity' not 'weight'; at 3.5 kg (7.7 lbs), this is a back-friendly instrument, despite some headstock bias when it's not on a strap. Attention to detail across the whole instrument is exemplary; a Neutrik locking jack socket has been included along with a Hipshot B-type bridge and string tree, Gotoh GB 7 machine heads and Dunlop straplocks. The full D-shaped neck profile is pleasingly playable and works well with the 'infinite radius' flat fingerboard and 19mm string spacing. With no sharp fret ends anywhere on the neck, anyone who plays this is in for a very comfortable experience.

The electronics package is calculated to produce the goods. A pair of ACG-designed soapbar pickups are matched with an ACG circuit designed in conjunction with circuit wizard John East. The Uni-Pre 4K is fully featured, with volume, pan, bass, treble, mid with mid-sweep controls, alongside a treble boost facility for biting top end. There's also a passive tone control. This functions in both active and passive modes, which can be selected using a push/pull function on the same control.

Sounds and Playability

Cringean's attention to the tonal performance of his instruments has yielded a noticeable acoustic tone in the Retro B J4. With a bolt-on neck attachment, the expected spring and bounce is already evident – and holding the bass against your body, you can feel the vibration of all four strings. The sustain and resonating qualities of the timbers are impressive.

Plugging in, what have we got? With the EQ set flat and the passive tone wide open, a woody tone can be clearly heard. The use of soapbars instead of single-coil pickups means a regular Jazz bass tone isn't automatically available, but the sound is still crisp and throaty, with a smoothness in the lower register. Active and passive modes operate at an almost equal volume, so should you need to switch over to passive mode in a dead-battery emergency you won't be faced with a drastic drop in output. Panning between the pickups shows a good degree of tonal change, and a fair amount of ground can be covered without even touching the EQ.

That said, if extensive EQ options are your thing, the East-supplied circuitry is blessed with an extensive selection of robust tones. As with most East circuits, a minor adjustment to the controls can effect radical changes to your tone, so cut and boost with caution. The mid-sweep facility is particularly useful in giving your signal some extra projection, especially in the low-mid department for extra punch. If you're a slapper or tapper, or if you just like your tone to sizzle, the treble boost will give you that extra glassiness.

ACG basses are well regarded for their playability, and this bass is following in that tradition. The neck is supremely comfortable, while the flat fingerboard provides an effortless performance across the whole register. The setup is excellent, with almost no fret buzz.

Conclusion

At a fraction under £2k, this is an enjoyable bass that won't break the bank. It doesn't matter that it isn't a traditional Jazz bass in terms of looks or core tone. It justifies every penny of its pricetag. We're very impressed.

Review conducted at the Great British Bass Lounge. www.facebook.com/greatbritishbasslounge

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1975
Made In | UK
Colour | Green to purple burst, satin finish
Body | Alder core with figured maple top
Neck | One-piece maple, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, five-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 40mm
Fingerboard | Birdseye maple
Frets | 22
Pickups | ACG OWSB (neck) and SB (bridge) soapbar pickups
Electronics | ACG/John East Uni-Pre 4K active 9-volt 3-band EQ (bass, sweepable mid, treble)
Controls | Volume/pickup pan (stacked), bass/treble (stacked with push/pull for additional treble boost), mid/mid-sweep (stacked), passive tone control (PTC) (push/pull for active/passive operation)
Hardware | Black hardware, Hipshot B-type bridge, Gotoh GB7 machine heads
Weight | 3.5kg / 7.7 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Hiscox case
Left-hand option available | Yes, as a custom order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Multiple tone options
Minus | None
Overall | Another splendid instrument from ACG

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Photo: Olly Curtis

PIGTRONIX
Philosopher Bass Compressor Micro

We meat Pigtronix's ham-pressive new compressor. Does it hog your tone or bring home the bacon, asks Joel McIver

JHS
www.jhs.co.uk

£149

Have a tweak of the controls of Pigtronix's new fun-sized bass compressor and all is as it should be, until you start messing with the Grit control – and a mighty overdrive tone springs from your speakers. It's very satisfying to hear such a giant effect emanating from a pedal the size of the lump of cheese that you probably shouldn't have had for lunch. What's more, you can modulate the drive tone effortlessly, moving from a smooth, synth-like fuzz to a doomy wail straight from the drawer marked 'Lemmy'.

In fact, although this unit is primarily marketed as a compressor – and indeed, it does compress your sound usefully – its most prominent use will, I predict, be as an affordable overdrive. Not that Pigtronix have stinted when it comes to the compression features; the Sustain control does a great job of varying the effect threshold and limiting (or delimiting) the peaks and spikes caused by your playing, simultaneously ensuring that the bottom end of your sound isn't diminished.

The Grit control is the distortion, tuned (it says here) "especially for low-frequency domination", and there's a Volume control for that epic 128-bar solo in the middle of 'Freebird'. The key control, though, is Blend, which determines the balance of clean-versus-effected tones. Personally I found a touch of uneffected signal added some punch to the overall sound, although that will obviously depend on a given bassist's individual goals.

On a practical note, the true-bypass switching ensures that the unit doesn't muddy up your tone when you're going straight through it, and there's an internal voltage-doubling circuit that gives you and your active bass 18 volts of DC. All this for a US-made pedal that doesn't cost a crippling amount if your intoxicated guitarist accidentally kicks it into the moshpit. Thumbs up from us.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | £149
Made In | USA
Features | Sustain, Blend, Volume, Grit controls
Dimensions | L 3.75" x H 1.5" x W 1.75"
Power | 9v DC

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Oink-credible range of features at this low price
Minus | None
Overall | Super-useful, affordable compressor/overdrive

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

BASSICS Effects

A clutch of pedals from the design board of Malcolm Toft have caught our eyes... and ears! Brooks prepares his right boot

Synergy Distribution
www.synergydistribution.co.uk

£199

Following on from his BPA-01 floor-based preamp, Malcolm Toft – a man who has famously worked with the likes of the Beatles, T-Rex and David Bowie as an audio engineer and recording console designer – has put his expertise into a new range of bass-centric pedals, drawing on his knowledge and experience of recording great bass tones. Here for our delectation are compression, EQ, distortion and preamp units made in the UK. A nine- to 18-volt AC or DC power supply can be used to power these pedals, all of which share a number of features: LED-illuminated controls for high visibility, rugged metal chassis, clear plastic controls, the same dimensions, footprint, cloth carry bag and pricetag of £199.

The Squeezer compressor features a four-LED indicator to show the effect it has on your signal, which is noticeable; the Drive control fattens the bass tone and adds some harmonic richness to the overall sound. Featuring studio-quality VCA (voltage controlled amplifier) compression, the attack and release of the bass signal is smooth and transparent. The Tone Ranger EQ pedal has a six-control interface along with a high/normal Gain switch, and covers a frequency range from 40Hz up to 3kHz with a 15dB boost and cut for the low, mid and high frequency controls. Kicking the effect in offers the player significant tone-shaping options, and the subtlety of the unit is totally at the discretion of the player.

The Cruncher distortion pedal is a well-featured unit, complete with high and low EQ settings, which have a marked effect on the tone of the distortion. The blend control acts as a useful buffer between the distorted tone and the original clean signal, so you can quickly reference the changes you've applied. A switch allows you to select a 'soft' or 'hard' crunch, which significantly affects the coloration of the bass signal. The Omni Pre unit offers two studio quality preamps; this allows the player to use two instruments with independent settings, or mix both of them identically. The unit also features headphone and balanced XLR DI outs. A mute function via a second switch, level indicator, and switchable options for individual instrument output or mixed together completes the feature list.

All four pedals are compact, impressive-sounding units with useful features and studio-quality sounds. The stomp switches are solid, but if there is a negative point, it's that I found the other controls on each unit slightly wobbly. They don't feel quite sturdy enough, which would be a concern in a gigging environment. However, I'm sure this can be addressed over time – and everything else these pedals do is very impressive.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £199
Made In | UK
Features | **SQ1 Squeezer Compressor:** Drive, Compress, Gain. **TR1 Tone Ranger EQ:** Low/Mid/High Frequency selectors, -15/+15 dB Level selectors, Input Gain. **CR1 Cruncher Distortion:** Gain, Blend, Output, Low EQ, High EQ, Soft/Hard Crunch. **OP1 Omni Pre Preamp:** Input 1 Level, Input 2 Level, Output Level, Independent/Mix switch, Mute switch, Balanced XLR DI output
Power | 9-18v AC/DC power supply
Dimensions | 78mm x 106mm x 130mm

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great sounds, useful features, reasonably priced
Minus | The loose, wobbly controls could be improved
Overall | Impressive collection of pedals

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...

Joel McIver, editor

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across 17 years of touring, and 42 solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?

www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners | 66

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level

Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate | 72

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section

Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in almost every conceivable musical situation – function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for BGM since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for legendary bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced | 76

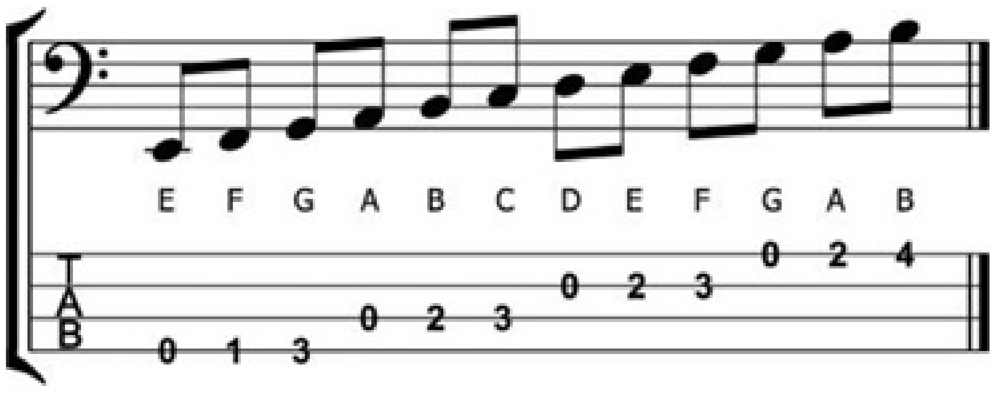
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

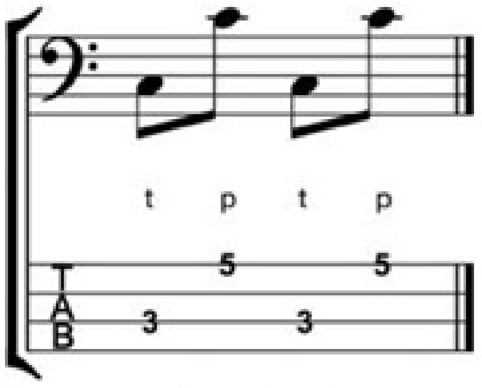
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

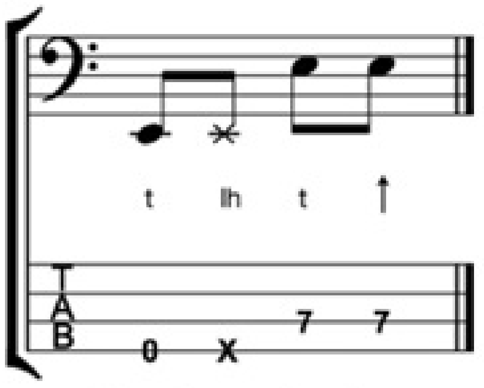


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



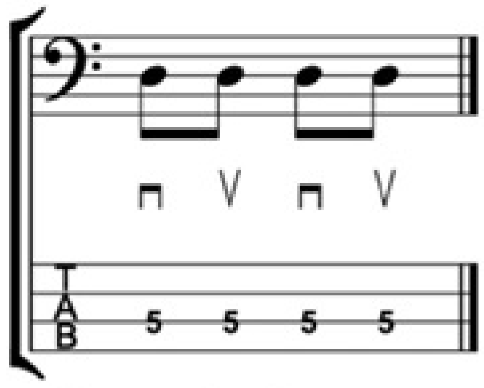
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



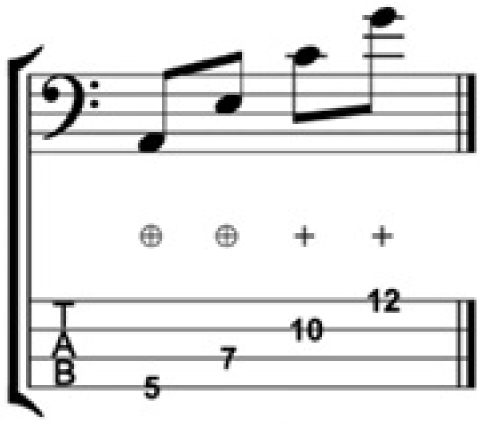
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

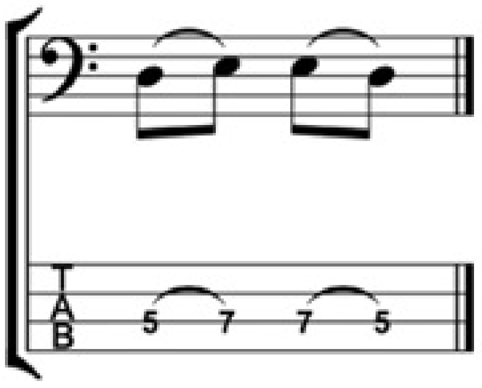
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

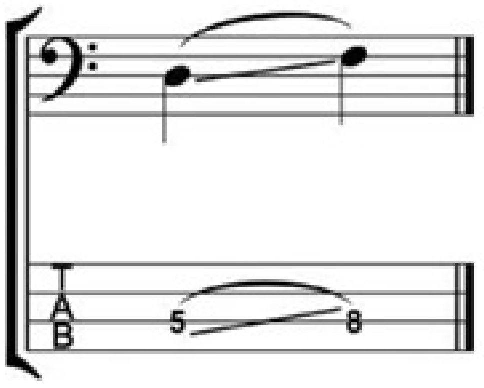
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



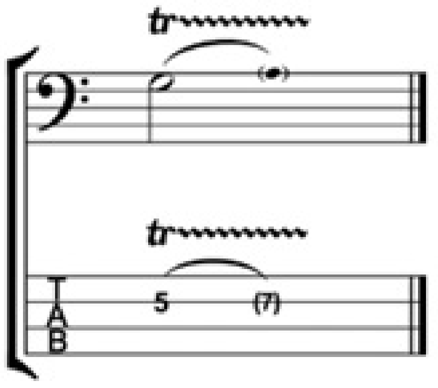
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



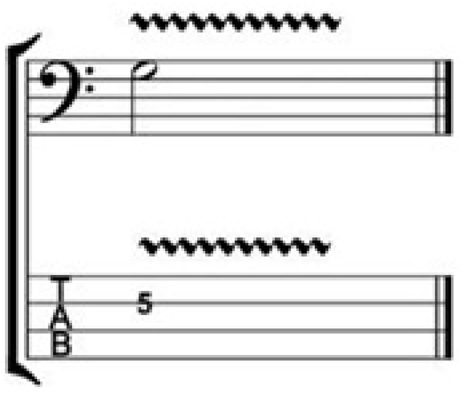
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

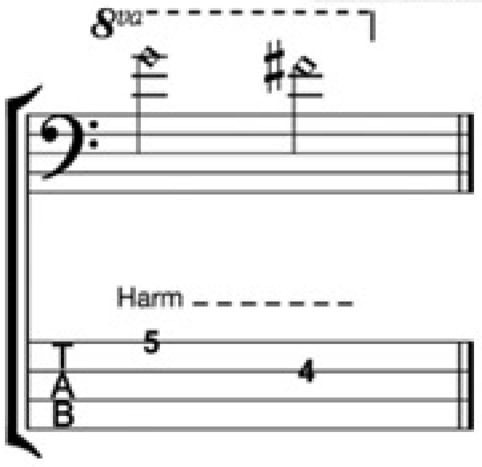
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

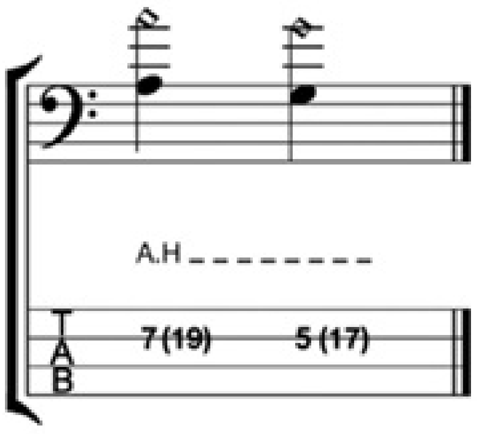
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

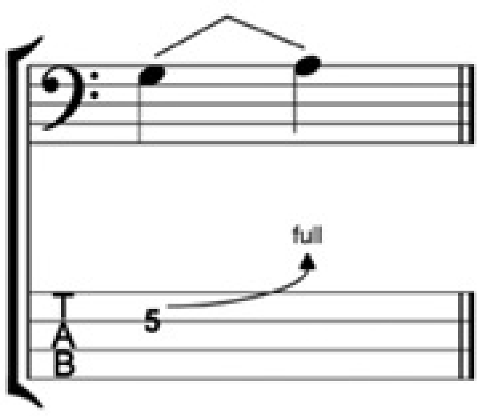
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

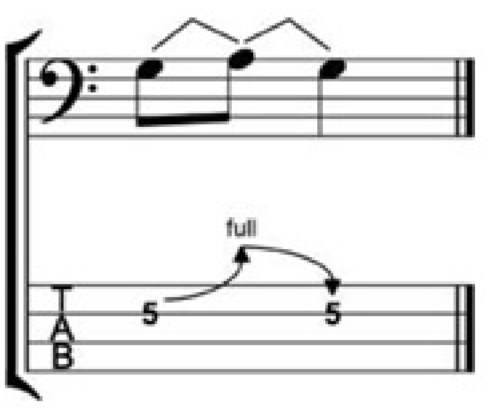
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as *BGM*'s world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Build your skill set, advises jazz ninja Ruth

You need a lot of skills to be a professional bass player, apart from playing the actual instrument well. For example, I play in several regular bands, but I also get asked to do a lot of last-minute gigs, which I find quite stressful. Still, it must mean that people trust me to do a good job, even without much preparation time. On the other hand, it's frustrating because I feel like I can never really get deeply into the music and enjoy the gig. In those situations, I'm usually reading and very alert to what is going on in the band.

It's a good idea to acquire a certain number of skills that will allow you to do a good job in an unprepared situation. Half of it is being able to hear things and adjust to changes quickly, and the other half is being able to understand scores well and identify sections that may change. Of course, as bass players we carry a lot of the responsibility when it comes to holding a tune together, so trying not to lose the form is vital – otherwise everyone else might get lost as well.

I recently played a last-minute gig with a choir; as usual, there was nowhere near enough rehearsal time to get the band sounding really good. The scores were mostly wrong, and were still being changed on the actual day of the concert. This is one of those situations where I have learned simply to mark in as much as I can – and even rewrite some of the charts for myself! – as I knew it was going to be impossible to read from some of them. Some charts were 16 pages long, which makes them impossible to handle in a live situation where you're playing continuously. I quickly rewrote the chart in sections, and marked where the bass-lines changed, simply because those were what I needed to know in the concert.

I know we all hear music very differently – but being able to quickly identify what you can do to handle a disorganised situation is one of our most valuable skills as gigging bass players.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

DANIEL FIRTH

We're better together, says Cradle Of Filth's bassist Dan

In my previous article I talked about attitudes towards practice, and various methods of approaching it. As important as that is, I'd now like to stress the value of getting out there and regularly playing with other musicians. Live band performance is where many professionals do the bulk of their work and, like most things, it's a learned skill. It can be a very different world to practising on your own, where you're

© Leonardo Trevito

usually playing to recorded tracks or metronomes, because people can be unpredictable. You have to get used to thinking on your feet and adapting to unexpected situations, especially when things start to go a bit wrong.

If you're experienced enough to stay cool and read others well in those moments, the chances are that a live audience won't realise that anything has gone amiss. It's also good to have bandmates around to motivate and inspire you. I find there's nothing better than simply having regular rehearsals, gigs and recording sessions with a band in the diary to get you working on your instrument and making sure your playing is at its best. It's in these situations that you really start perfecting your tone as well, because it's quite likely that some delicate balancing will be needed to accommodate and complement all the instruments in a mix.

When it comes to writing together, bouncing riffs off one another can be very fun; you're almost guaranteed to discover interesting new spins on your ideas that wouldn't normally have come to mind. A great bass part can really lay the foundation for a song too, making it a fine starting point – it's so satisfying to hear the layers build up from there, as people add colour and personality through their own contributions. Maybe most importantly, it's an absolute blast to crank the amps and play with a full band. Certainly with metal, I find it's a cathartic act, and a real rush. It's here that all the great ideas and time you've invested in your instrument really start coming to life – so if I haven't emphasised it enough yet, get out there and do it!

www.cradleoffilth.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy? bassist Mike warns us not to get complacent

We humans are creatures of habit by nature. Most of us have a favourite seat in our house, a familiar route when we walk to the shops, and a morning routine. Of course, when it comes to the bass, our habits can sometimes stifle creativity and inhibit musical growth. We may not even realise that we're doing it, but reverting to familiar sounds, predictable runs and fills – or simply refusing to embrace a new playing technique – can set back our musical progression.

If you're stuck in a rut, how can you get a fresh perspective on your playing? The obvious way for me is to swap basses. Now, I'm not condoning buying a lovely new bass every time you're bored, but I do find that a playing a different instrument can prompt a flush of creativity. A different neck, or even a shorter scale, can shake up your approach to writing parts, and your fingers will end up playing different patterns. If you don't want to shell out for a new bass, you can always swap with a friend. That way both of you will get the benefit.

Another trick, if you're a pick player, is to start using your fingers for a bit, and vice versa. Try a bit of slap playing, and while you're at it, experiment with where you pick the string over the body. It's amazing how much the range of tone and attack can vary that way. Another good way to shake things up is to write a new bass-line for a song, either for one of your own tunes or a cover. Try and ignore the original line and come up with something completely new and off the wall – this can be a very enlightening exercise.

At rehearsal a while ago, I swapped pedalboards with our guitarist. Now I had distortions, delays and reverbs at my disposal, while he was using my flanger and octave pedals. It was a fun, interesting sonic experiment that turned out to be surprisingly productive. Just like in life, where you can take a different route to the newsagents, or sit in a different chair to watch TV, you can also come at your bass playing from a different angle and get a whole new take on it. Happy experimenting!

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE TV STAR

DAVE SWIFT

Jools Holland's bassist Swifty recalls a tough episode

A significant challenge for me came back in 1997 when I was asked to dep for a one-off gig with Squeeze. I was promised that the tapes I would need to learn the songs would be sent to me months in advance, which was a relief because some of Squeeze's songs are pretty complex. I regarded having lots of time to work on them as crucial. Of course, what happened? The tapes arrived at 10pm, the night before the gig!

There I was, with no fewer than 27 songs to learn; I knew I'd have to work through the night. Even so, there would be no time to learn each song note for note, or to do detailed transcriptions. I would just have to make do with chord charts and sparse notation. That kind of task needs some serious nutrition, so I ordered some delicious-looking Chinese food, wolfed it down and got started on the music.

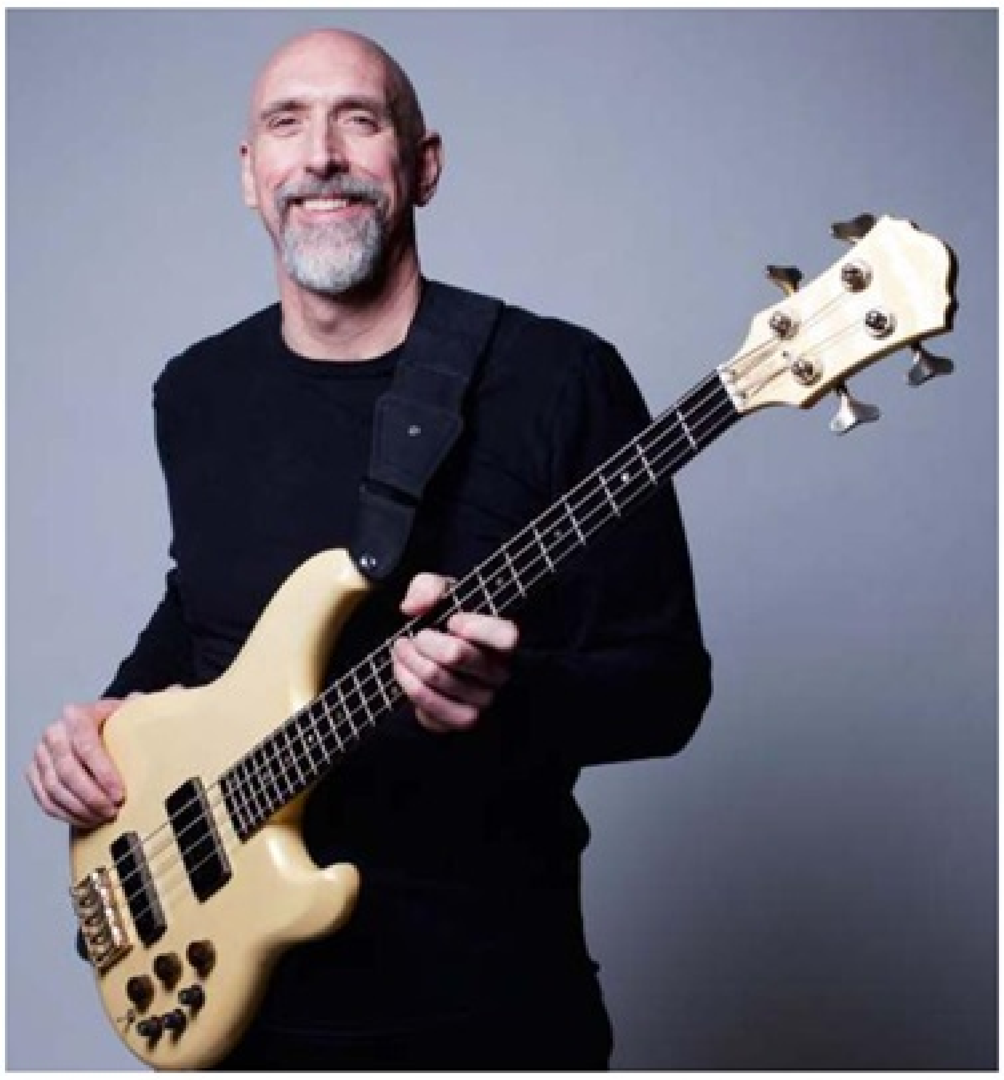
You guessed it... after 15 minutes, I felt awful, and soon I was throwing up everywhere. I don't know if it was simply caused by stress, something dodgy in the food, or maybe a stomach bug, but the symptoms were so bad that I genuinely considered calling an ambulance. Then I thought "Come on, Dave – you're an experienced, seasoned professional, and Squeeze are depending on you. Don't let them down!" Miraculously, I found the strength and endurance to stay up all night amid the cold sweats and vomiting to finish my hastily-written charts.

The next day, feeling utterly drained, I headed to the soundcheck. Informed about the previous night's trauma, the band were shocked to see me there at all, but they were very relieved. Adrenaline and sheer grit got me through the gig that night, but it was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. Afterwards, Squeeze were thrilled and impressed that I'd done such a good job. Me? I was whacked!

What did I learn from this? Simply that sometimes you can't just give up at the first sign of adversity, particularly in this industry. Often, you need to grit your teeth, gird your loins, and do what you have to do to make things work, no matter how overwhelming the odds are.

I'm not suggesting that you should compromise your health for your job, but being known as someone who is reliable under any circumstances will help you to become an in-demand bassist. And do consider your choice of fast food with great care...

www.daveswiftbass.com



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STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Two lessons for the price of one? Nothing's beyond subtlety of bass maestro Steve Lawson

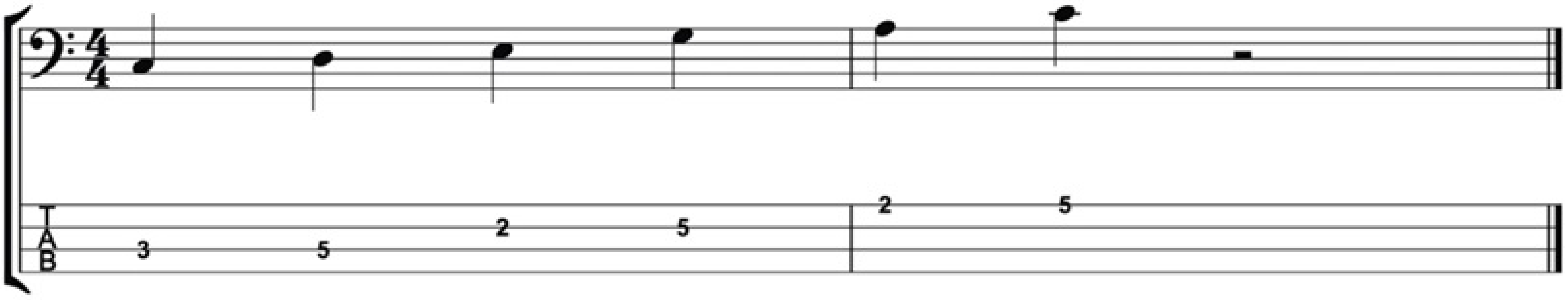
Welcome back to another fun-packed month of bass wisdom! This month we're going to look at some applied learning and think a little about how we can maximise the impact of our practice time by combining areas of study to form exercises that are rich with discovery potential.

We're going to combine two things that we've looked at before, in an effort to get twice as much out of one practice session. Firstly, we will be taking a deeper look at the articulation techniques that we explored last month. Secondly, we're going to be revisiting the Major pentatonic scale, familiarising ourselves with playing it all over the neck. The great thing about this approach is that while we're actively learning about one aspect of our study, we're still passively practising the other in the background. All set? Let's dive in!

Let's start by looking at the notes in our Major pentatonic scale again; here it is in the key of C:

As the pentatonic patterns move up the neck, lift the bass neck away from your body to give you better access to the upper frets

Example 1



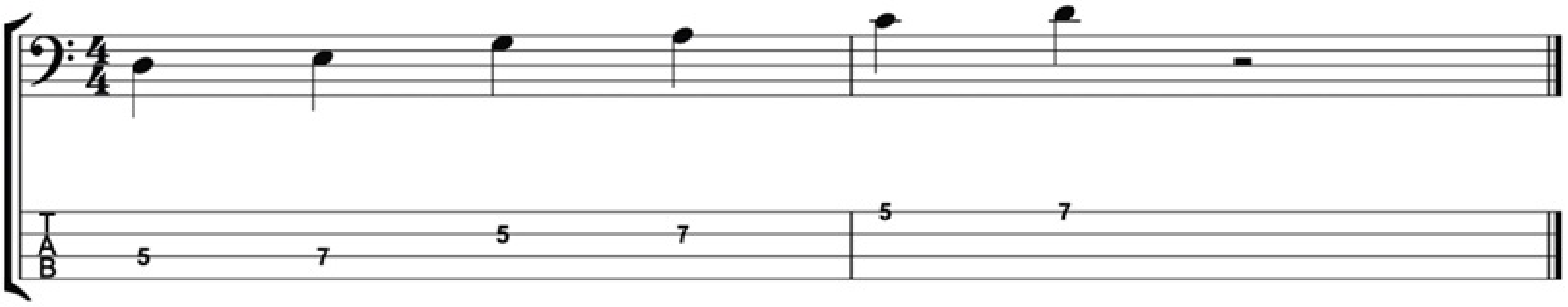
Now, there are two ways to think about how we move this across the neck. One relates to scales and the other to chords. In both instances, what we're thinking about is what happens to the group of notes that we're playing if we start on a different note in the sequence. We're not going to change the group of notes; we're still just going to be using C, D, E, G and A, but we're going to arrange it so C isn't the lowest note.

In scale terms, the range of one-octave patterns that we get by playing through the notes in a particular key, and starting on each note in turn, are called 'modes'. If we do the same thing to a chord (start from each note in the chord and play through the rest of the notes in the chord across an octave) we call those new patterns 'inversions'. So what we're doing to the notes in the pentatonic can be seen as either forming the five modes of the pentatonic scale, or as inverting it.

The reason for explaining it both ways is that they offer two ways of conceiving the relationship between the group of notes. Scales are broadly horizontal in their formation (we play them one after the other), whereas chords are vertical (we're dealing with notes conceived of simultaneously). The notes in our pentatonic scale can be thought of as a particular type of chord, in this case a C 6/9 chord. That looks like a complex chord symbol, but it just means that we've got the 6th note in the scale added and the 9th (which is the 2nd up one octave).

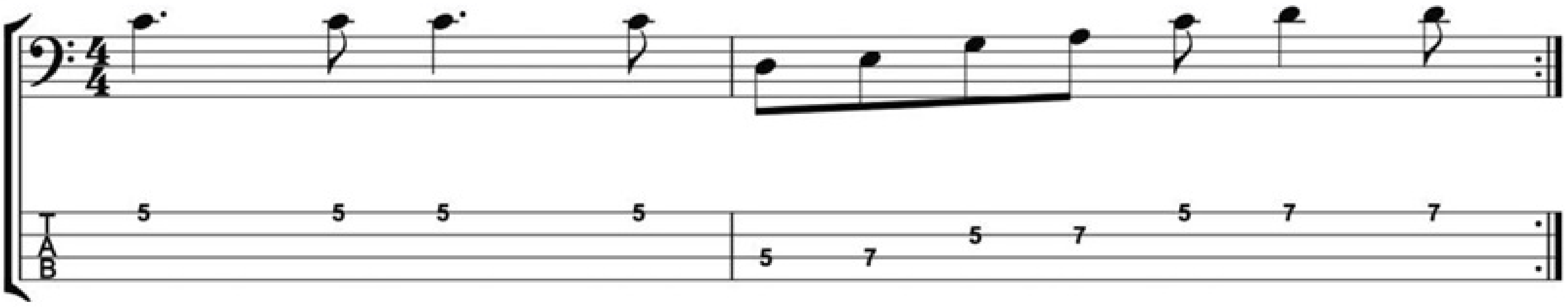
So, if instead of playing C, D, E, G, A, C, we remove the low C from the start and finish on the octave of the D instead, we get this pattern on the neck:

Example 2



Look at the tab for this sequence. It's just a major 2nd (that's a step of two frets) played across three strings. Notice that the C – the root note of our parent scale or chord – is now the fifth note in the sequence. When we're thinking about the options that this gives us for a run or a fill, it's worth noting that we now have a way into lines that approach C from slightly unusual positions. Here's one example:

Example 3

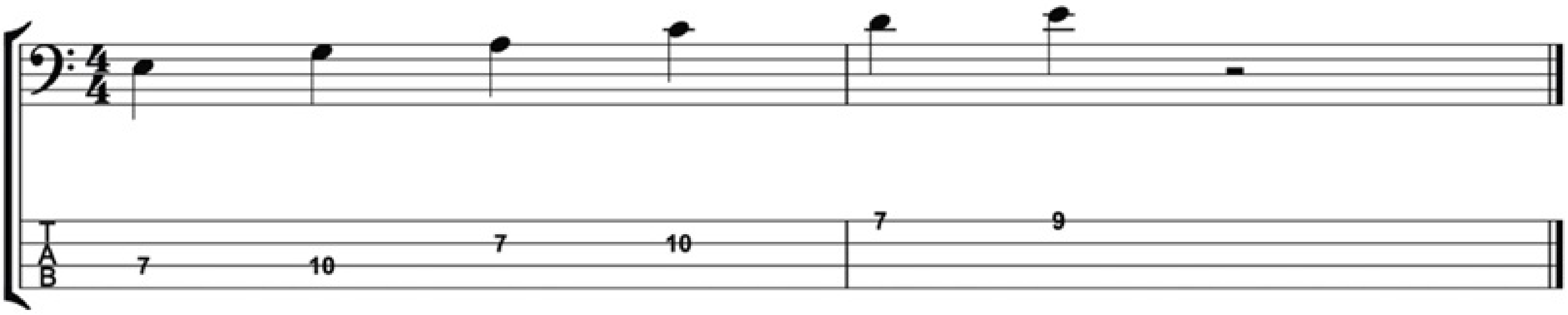


It's quite a jaunty melodic pattern, right? Slower tempos are often a lot more revealing than fast tempos, as each note hangs around for longer and any discrepancies in your playing are left bare for all to hear. If you rattle through an exercise, fumbling your way from note to note at high speed, all the nuances can all get lost in a blur of fret buzz and string rattle, and we can kid ourselves that our chops are just flying! So slow down and concentrate on playing accurately.

Sometimes the sound we're looking for can lead to a technique that's a little uncomfortable to execute, but if the groove calls for a particular technique it's better to learn that technique than to compromise the feel that we're going for. Much of the time we're looking for the most efficient way of playing, but every now and again a technique comes along that has a fabulous impact on the feel of a line, making it worth pursuing even if it's energy-intensive. Repetitive slides across multiple strings definitely falls into that category.

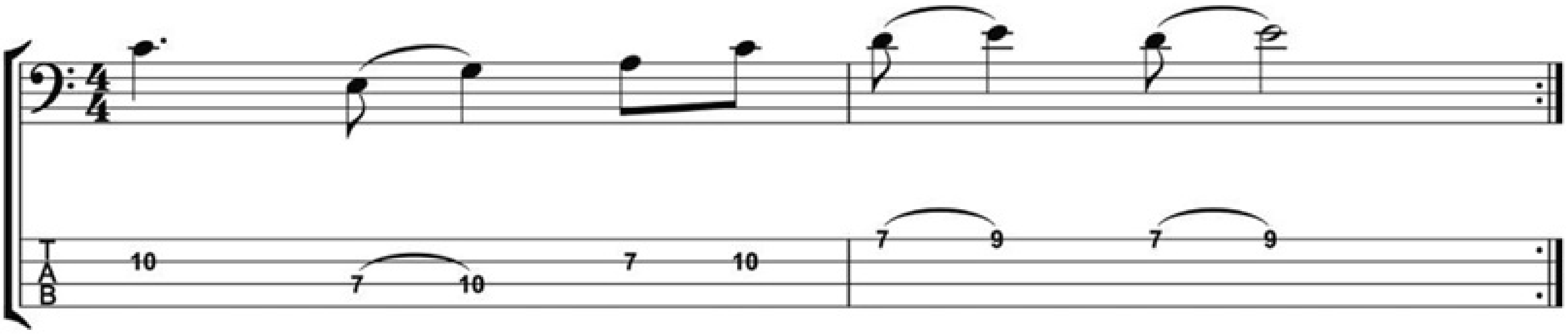
Let's look at the next mode of our pentatonic scale. Again, we take one note off the start, and add one at the end, so it becomes E G A C D E, as you can see on the next page:

Example 4



With each of these modes, spend some time experimenting to see what the different starting note lends to the feel of playing them. Try out different articulations to see which ones work well with each mode. This pattern gives us two minor third (or three-fret) intervals, which gives us a good shape for trying out our slides and hammer-ons over a slightly larger interval. Let's make a line out of it:

Example 5

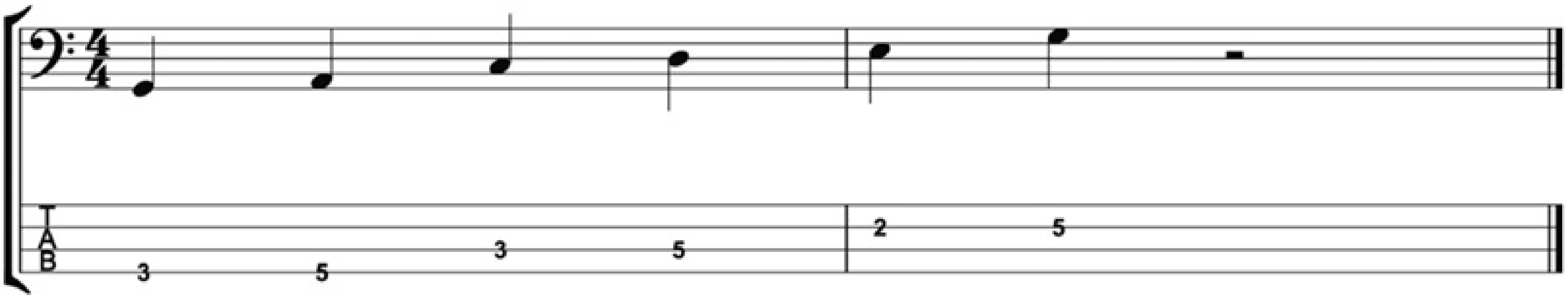


Again, we're starting on C as the root note of the chord. This time the line ends on a high E, and the repeat bar at the end takes us back to the start. Ending a bass-line on the Major third of a chord in this way (the E is two whole notes above C, making it the third note in the C Major scale) gives it a melodic feel and helps emphasise the 'majorness' of the chord. It'll sound really happy and jolly. This can be useful for bringing those qualities to music if you want it to sound like the Beach Boys, or even the Minutemen, but we should also recognise that it's inappropriate for other settings. It's unlikely to sound so great in a riff inspired by Pantera or Sisters Of Mercy.

You can take a little time here to experiment with playing this sequence in different positions. We can move the D and E notes on the G string up to frets 12 and 14 on the D string, so that the slide between the A and C leads nicely up the string a little further. I really enjoy exploring the back and forth between technical ideas that create new musical opportunities, and having musical ideas for which I need to find a technical solution. Practising variations on patterns like this, and finding as many different places as possible to play any particular sequence of notes, can often reveal new musical options that we might not have thought of without doing the exercise.

Mode 4 of C Major Pentatonic starts on the note G and looks like this:

Example 6



"THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF AMAZING MUSIC THAT CAN HAPPEN WITH JUST THESE FIVE NOTES"

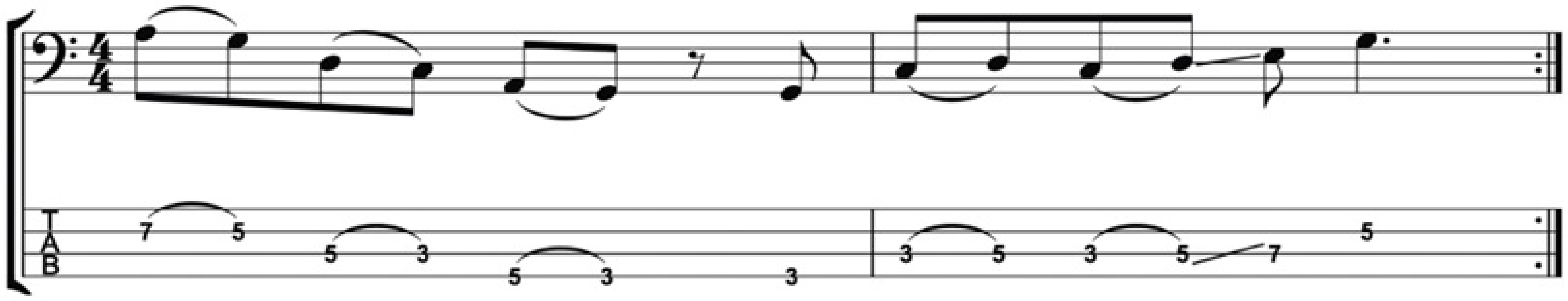
Notice that we've dropped it down an octave from the previous patterns. When we're learning shapes like this, it's useful to be able to play them in different positions on the neck, but for bass-lines, having them comfortable in lower positions is going to have a more immediate application than disappearing up into the rarified air above the 14th fret.

Try playing the 3rd mode of our pentatonic, the one starting on E, using the open E, A and D strings; it offers a whole load of new possibilities for hammering on after playing the open strings. That's a technique that's used in a ton of different rock contexts and is well worth exploring.

Back to our pattern starting on G; that note is the fifth, which is a really strong note to focus on in a lot of bass-line contexts. The fifth leads very solidly back to the root, so finishing a line on the fifth can impart a sense of inevitability, solidity and trustworthiness as it resolves back to the root on beat one. But that expectation is also a thing we can mess with; if we go elsewhere, then the surprise that comes from setting up a strong resolution and then moving away can add a great deal to a line.

Let's try coming down the scale on this one, which will give us a chance to try some pull-offs and downward slides:

Example 7

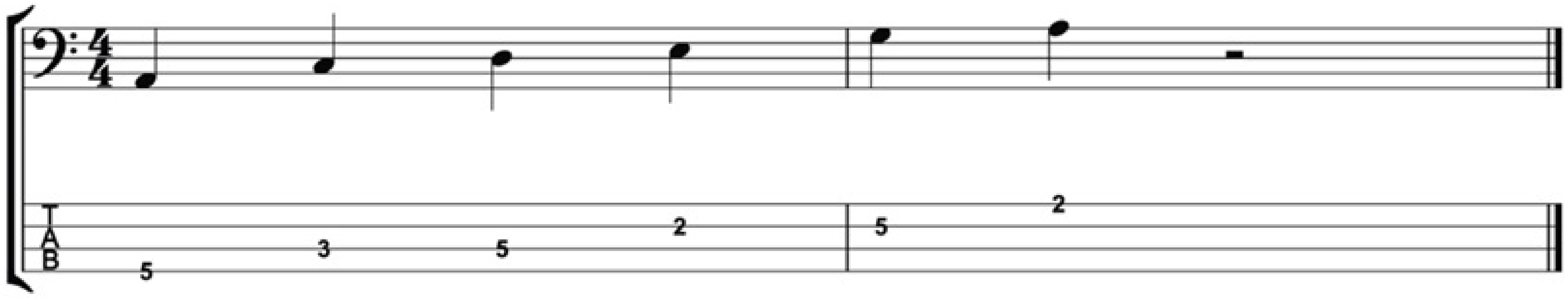


This is another jaunty line. It's tricky to get away from that feel with the major pentatonic, and easy to create it if that's the sound you're looking for. Training your ear is as much about knowing how to find an expected sound as it is about instantly recognising what someone else is playing. Getting familiar with the sound of the major pentatonic all across the neck like this will 'feed' your ear with ideas, storing up a set of patterns and phrases that you can draw on for that kind of sound.

Our last mode of the C Major pentatonic starts on A, and the pattern we end up with is an A minor pentatonic. Learning that these two shapes are interchangeable is so, so useful in finding lines that will work in both major and minor harmonic contexts. The example below is a reminder of the shape.

> "PRACTISING VARIATIONS ON PATTERNS LIKE THIS, AND FINDING AS MANY DIFFERENT PLACES AS POSSIBLE TO PLAY ANY PARTICULAR SEQUENCE OF NOTES, CAN OFTEN REVEAL NEW MUSICAL OPTIONS"

Example 8



What's different about the way I've laid the pattern out in the tab? That's not our usual minor pentatonic shape, is it? This way, we get to see it in relation to the C Major pentatonic; the rest of the notes, other than the A, fit within our usual root position C Major pentatonic. With all of these shapes, moving them around the neck helps us to see how they interlock. There's an awful lot of amazing music that can happen with just these five notes, as we've explored before. A world of groove awaits!

MUSIC TRUMP(ET)S WAR

Once upon a time, there was a man with a trumpet. And when he was a soldier in the US Army landing on the beaches of Normandy, he kept it by his side. Once, when he was standing guard at night, his captain told him: "Don't play tonight, there's a sharpshooter out there." But our man thought: "That guy out there is just as scared and lonely as me. I'll play a piece for him." The next day, a POW was brought into the camp, and he asked: "Who is the trumpeter that played 'Lili Marleen' last night? When I heard that song, the war was over for me - I just couldn't use my gun any more." The man with the trumpet was called Jack Leroy Tueller. And though it may sound like a fairy tale, this is a true story. A story only music can write.

THE POWER OF MUSIC!

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PHIL MANN

Intermediate Tutorial

Phil Mann creates a whole rainbow out of blues; follow along and get chromatic with your choice of intervals

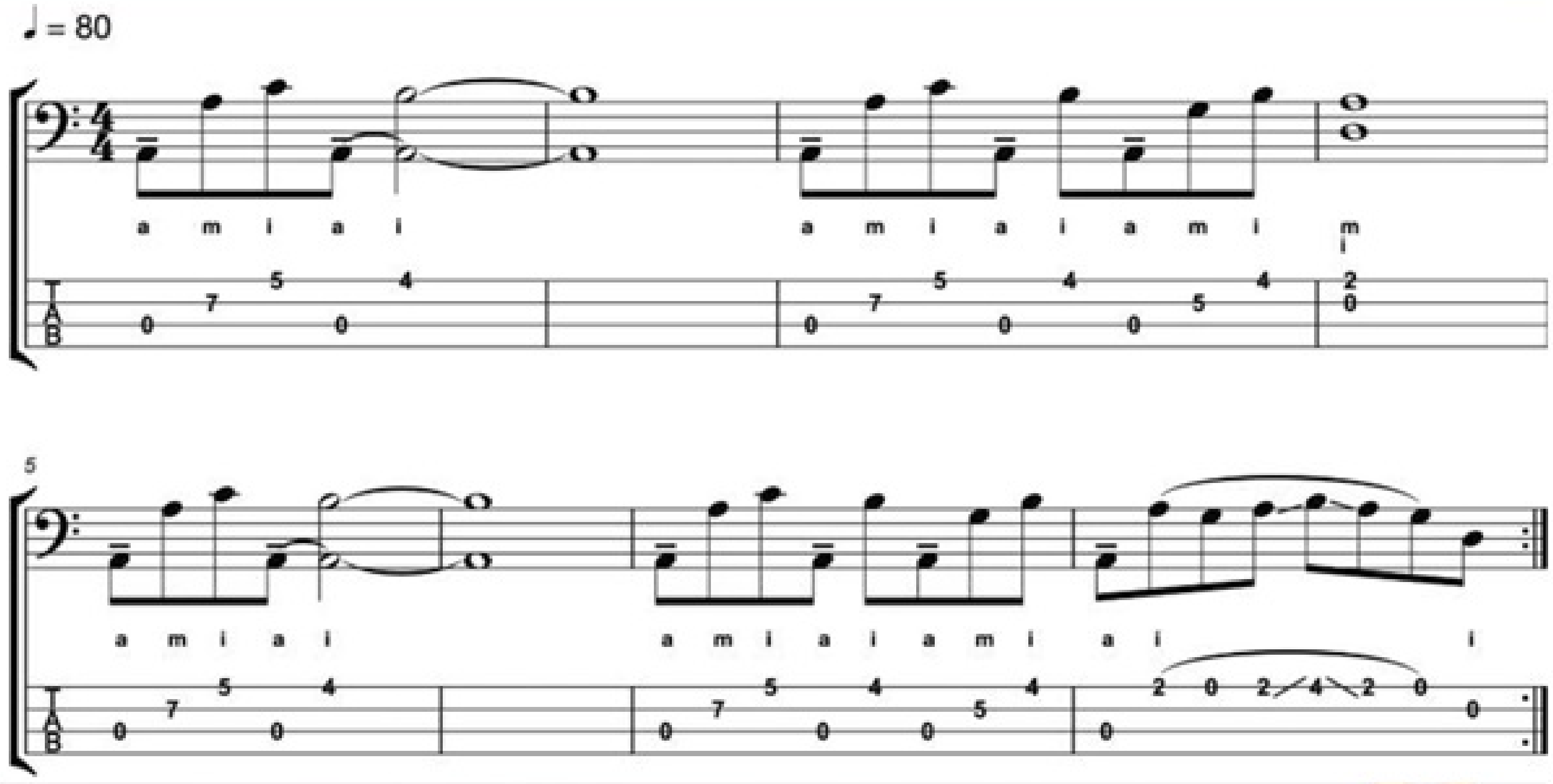
Welcome back! When practising three-fingered plucking, we tend to focus exclusively on a ring finger (a), middle finger (m) and index finger (i) method, and it's this rigidity in our technique which is key to developing our overall performance efficiency. With three-finger technique, locating an array of notes on different strings can become challenging. This is commonly due to our plucking hand not being able to use the preceding note's position as a reference, something that is also encountered in the early stages of learning classical guitar. The effect this can have on your overall performance can be fairly substantial, so let's get to work!

Example 1

Exercise 1 is a mid-tempo melodic piece with a great deal of compositional space. Every note up until the final bar appears on a different string and is therefore performed using a different finger.

Observe the tenuto markings resembling a subtract symbol above the note heads; these are a reminder to play each pitch in question to its full length, perhaps with a slight increase in volume to create some additional emphasis. Throughout the entirety of the exercise you'll experience this form of articulation every time you are required to play an open A string.

A note about the final bar. At this point you will notice that the measure is constructed using a series of hammer-ons and slurred notes that are both fretted and open-stringed. Thankfully, due to the manageable rhythmic content, the phrase is still relatively straightforward to execute.



Damian Erskine, a master of three-finger plucking

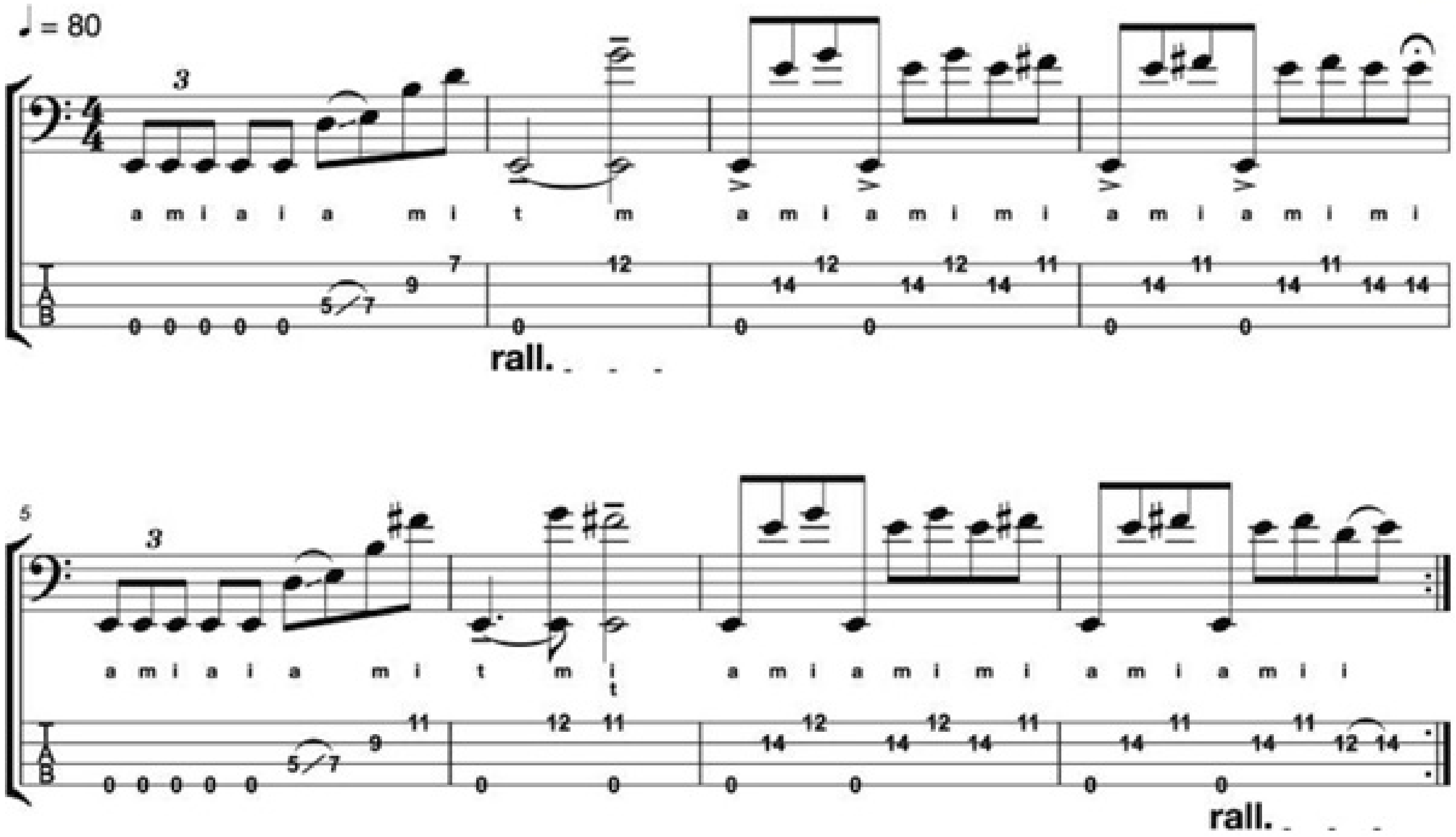
Battista Photography

Example 2

Exercise 2 employs a hybrid of both two- and three-fingered plucking techniques. Residing in the key of E minor, notice how bar one's initial eighth-note triplet is delivered using our three-fingered methodology, before being succeeded by just the index and ring fingers on the subsequent eighth notes.

This alternation in delivery method can produce a range of different textures to supplement your articulation. If you choose to explore the methodology further, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen's upright playing is a great place to start.

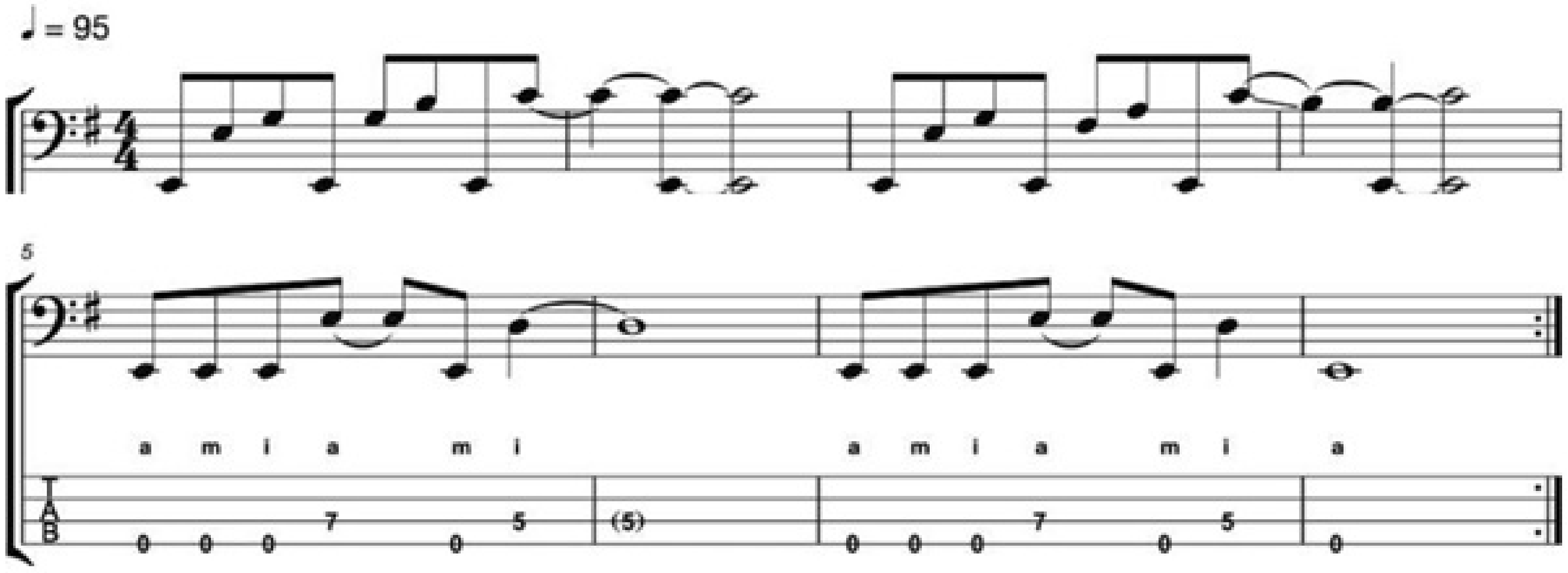
Another challenging aspect of Exercise 2 comes in the form of the thumbs used in the second and sixth measures. Take your time here, as attempting to manoeuvre your hand from three-fingered technique to a thumb method can prove tricky.



> **"THE INITIAL MELODIC ASCENT TRANSCENDS MINOR TRIAD VOCABULARY BEFORE COMING TO REST. IT'S THE RESIDUAL TEXTURE OF THIS PITCH WHICH PROJECTS A PESSIMISTIC ATMOSPHERE… IT'S DEFINITELY A SINISTER VIBE!"**

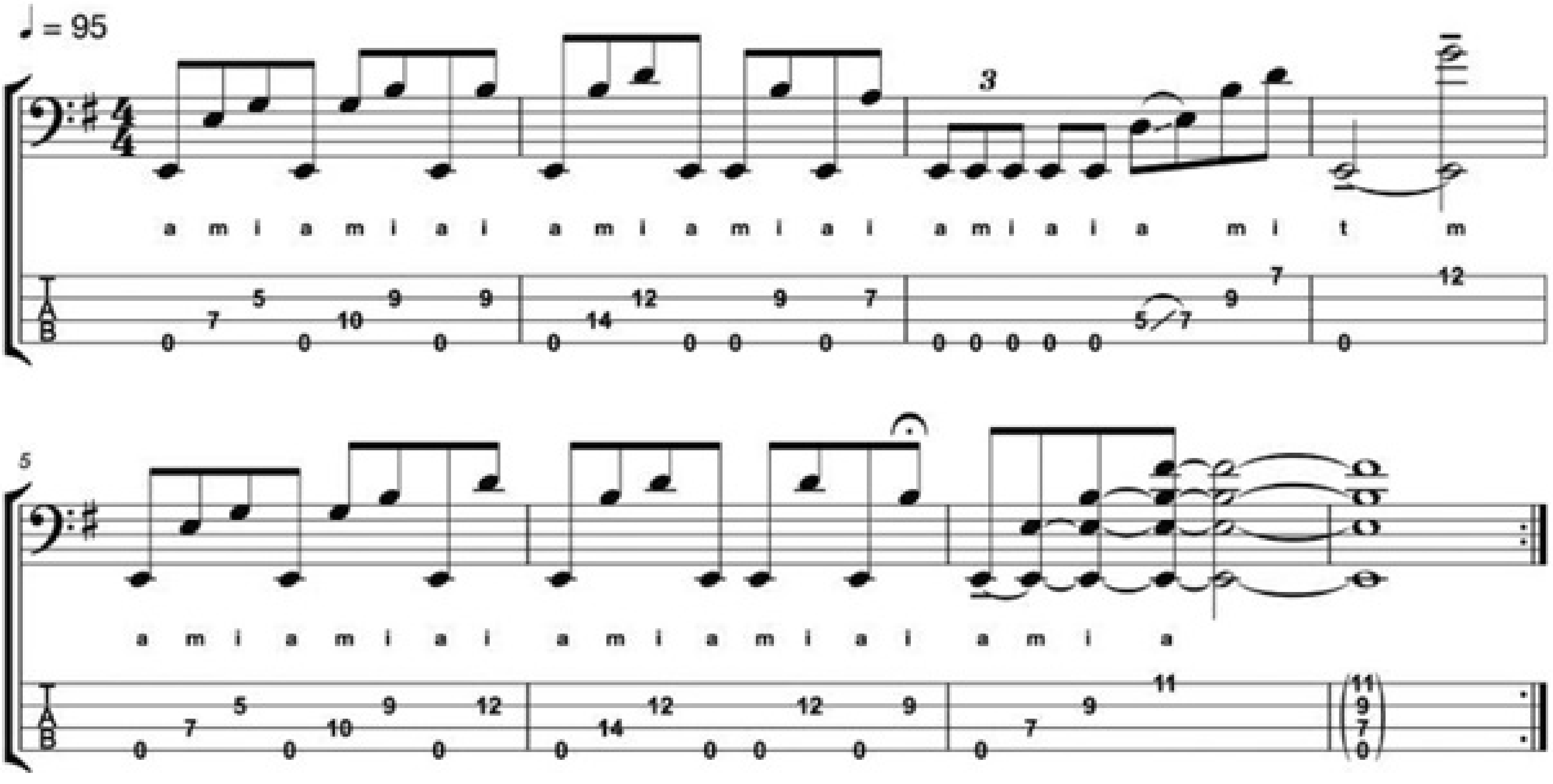
Example 3

Exercise 3 definitely projects a sinister vibe! The initial melodic ascent transcends minor triad vocabulary before coming to rest on the b13th interval. It's the residual texture of this pitch which, combined with the minor tonality, projects a pessimistic atmosphere, especially at a slower tempo. Utilising a call-and-response structure, the phrase is repeated in the second system, resolving to a far more uplifting interval of a perfect 5th. Why not add a little reverb and delay?



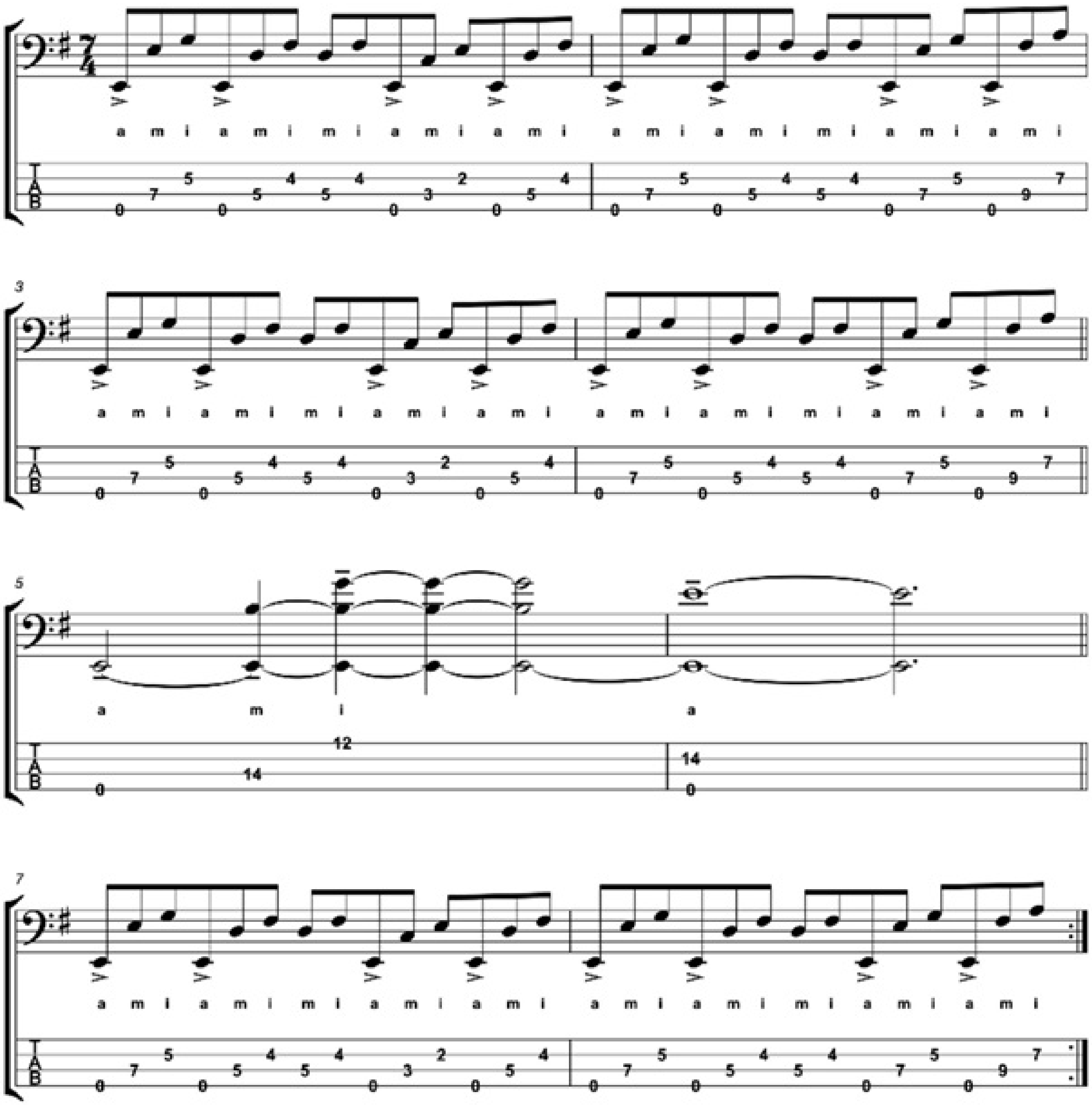
Example 4

In our penultimate exercise, minor tonality is once again at the forefront, plus additional elements from the previous exercises. The final system introduces a new concept that could prove particularly taxing; you'll be required to deliver the root note in two octaves, combined with 5th and 9th intervals in succession, while also allowing the intervals to continually ring out. Having the ability to assign each string to a different finger gives us a harmonic advantage, as the plucking hand is able to sweep across the entirety of the fingerboard to create a choral texture.



Example 5

Our final study is in 7/4, so instead of counting a traditional four quarter notes in a bar, we count seven. As this meter is only a single beat shy of two bars of 4/4, any melodic content has an air of excitement, as the downbeat arrives momentarily earlier than expected. The tip to engaging with this example of odd-time is not to think of it as a bar of seven, but in fact a bar of two smaller durations combined: four and three. Until next time!



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STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

Stuart Clayton's tapping tutorials will get your fingers moving faster than a cheetah with a train to catch

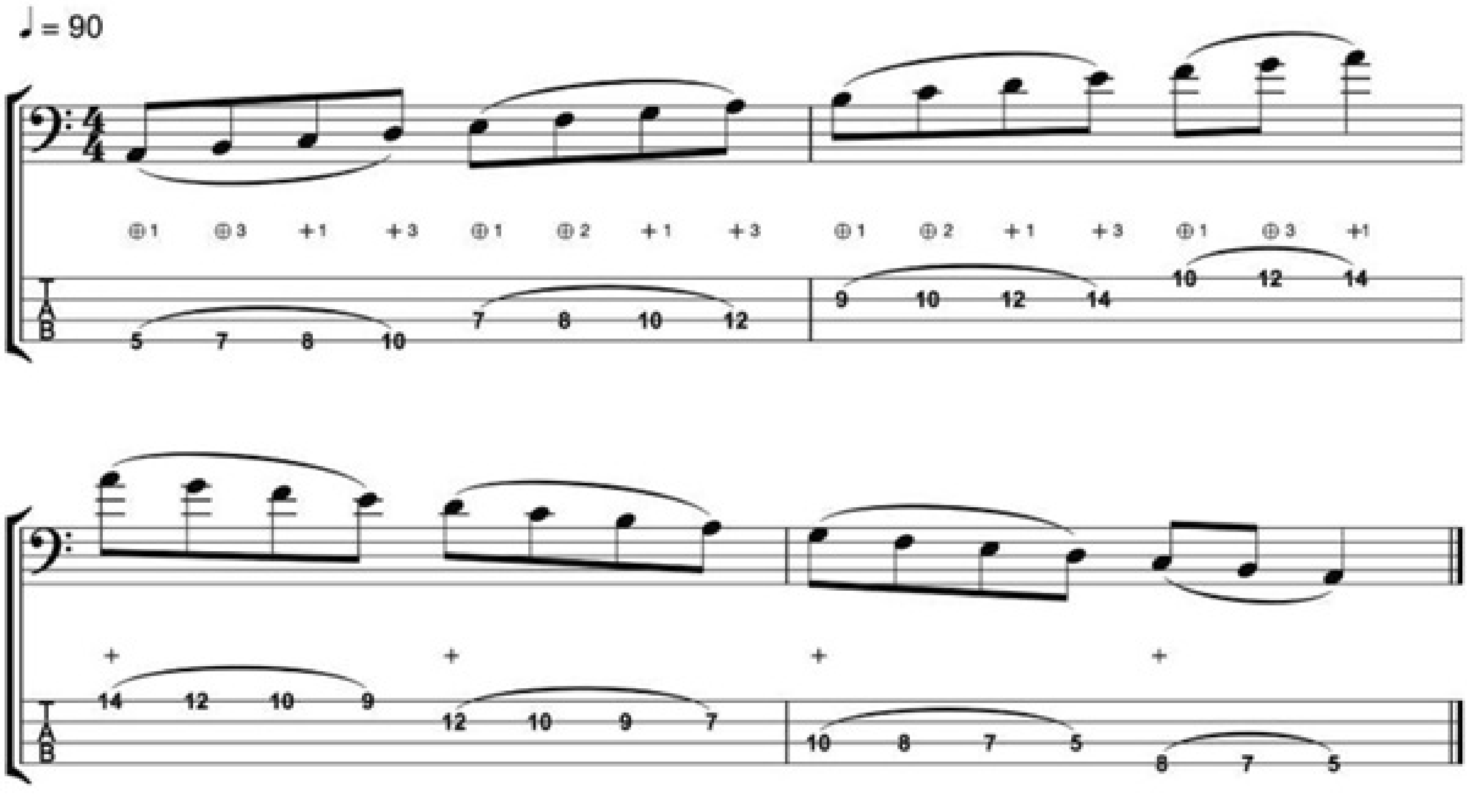
Welcome back! Let's take a look at some advanced linear tapping, a variation on the technique often favoured by guitarists and bassists such as Billy Sheehan and Stu Hamm. Linear tapping typically consists of running sequences of notes on the same string, performed by tapping with the picking hand, then hammering-on and pulling-off with the fretting hand. We're going to start out relatively gently by playing through some minor scales. Note that in the following examples, specific fingers have been indicated next to the tapping symbols – I strongly recommend following these.

Although we're just building up our skills at this stage, our lessons this month will include a couple of more interesting and challenging lines, and I'm confident that you'll begin to appreciate that the payoff for working through them is going to be well worth the investment.

"SPECIFIC FINGERS HAVE BEEN INDICATED NEXT TO THE TAPPING SYMBOLS – I STRONGLY RECOMMEND FOLLOWING THESE"

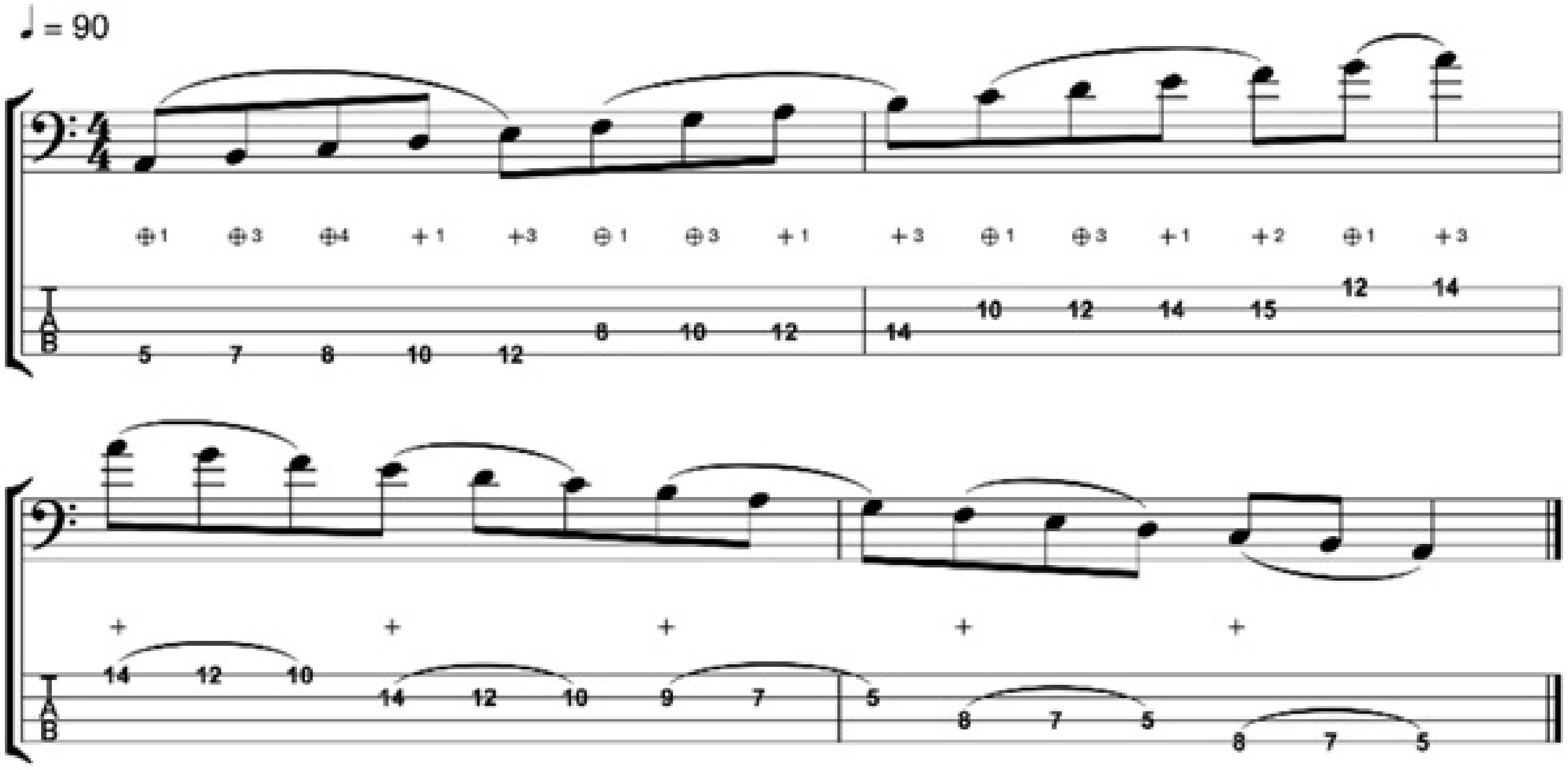
Example 1

This exercise is a two-octave A minor scale. The descending part of this scale features four-note sequences that require two pull-offs in the fretting hand. For example, at the beginning of bar 3, the A is tapped with the picking hand, then pulled off to sound the G, which should already be fretted. This in turn is pulled off to sound the F, which is pulled off to sound the E. Before tapping this line, the fingers should be in place on each note: fourth finger on the G, second on the F, first on the E. This sequence is then reused on the next string as the scale descends.



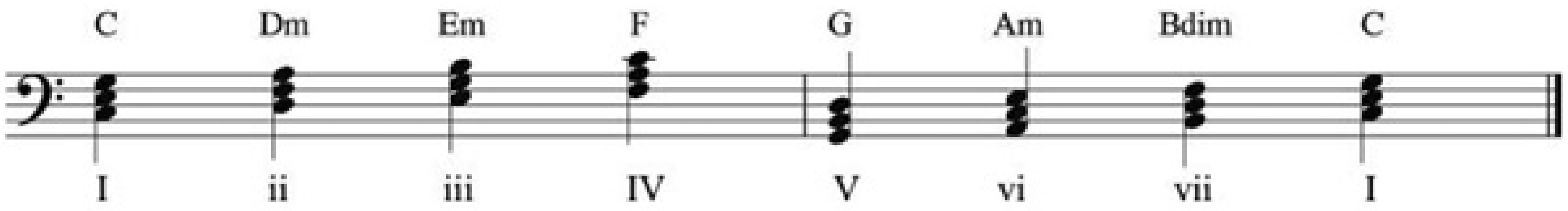
Example 2

As you work on scales in this way you will find that there are many different ways to play the scales themselves, and many different ways to tap them. You should aim to practise as many scales as possible using this technique. Doing so will give you the double benefit of working on the tapping technique, while getting in some scale practice – killing two birds with one stone!

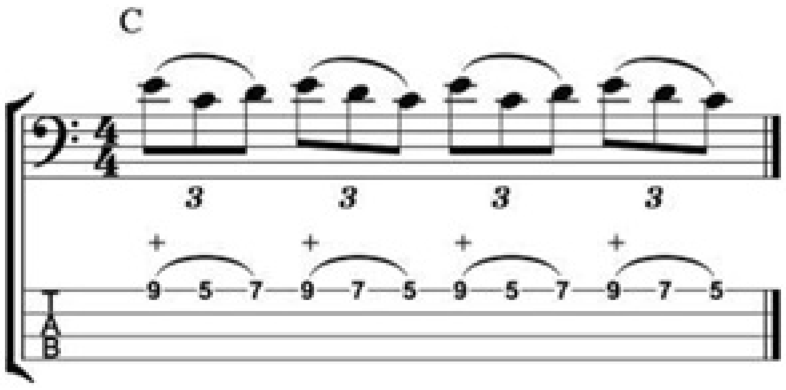


Implying Chords

If you are familiar with basic music theory (as I'm sure you are), you will know the series of diatonic chords that are created by harmonising the major scale in thirds. For your reference, here are the chords that are created by harmonising the C major scale:



It is possible to imply each of these chords using the three-note tapping figures that we have covered in this chapter. Consider the following example:

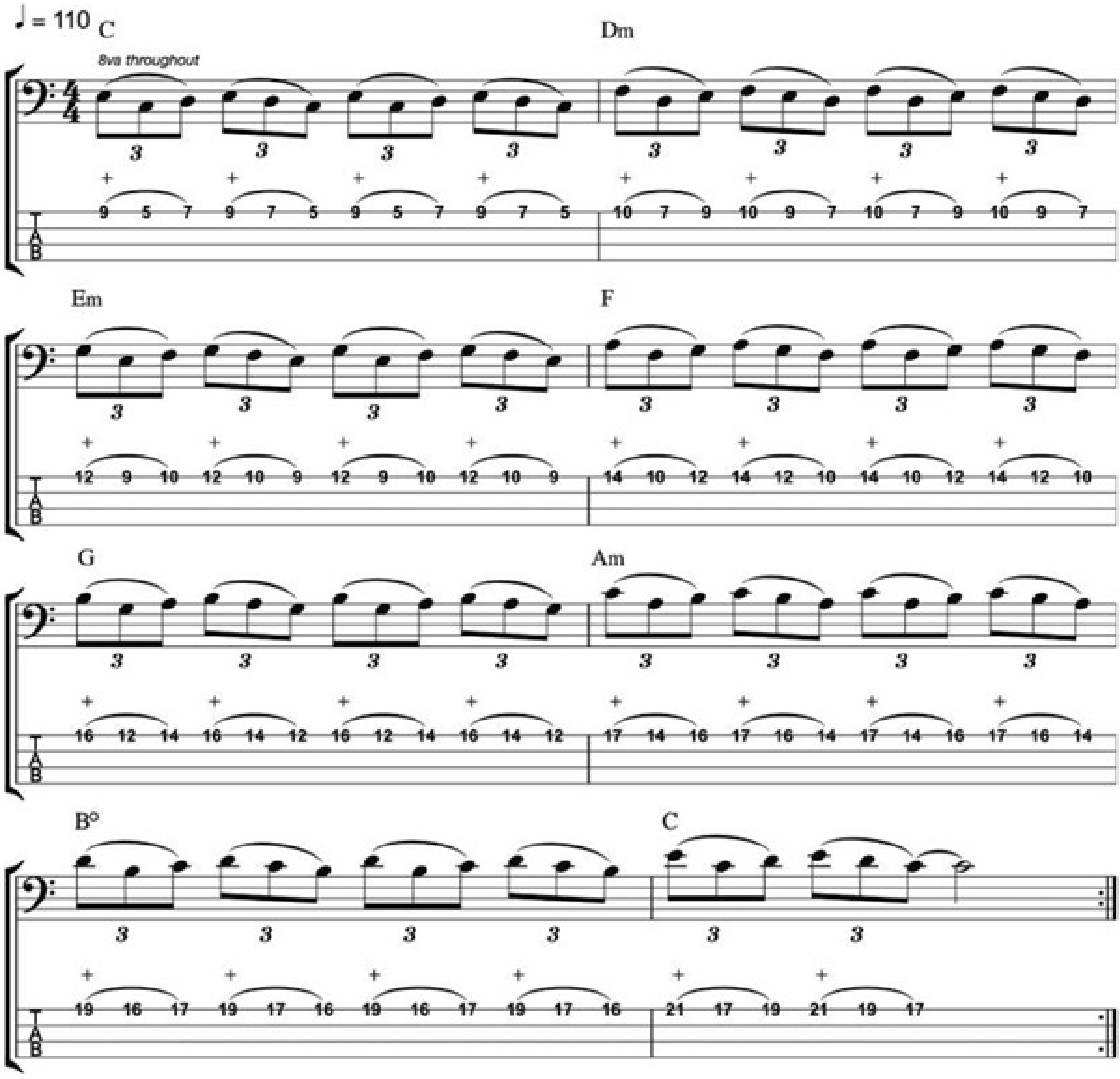


"AS YOU WORK ON SCALES IN THIS WAY YOU WILL FIND THAT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO PLAY THE SCALES THEMSELVES, AND MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO TAP THEM"

Virtuoso tapper Hamm is a master of the technique. His spelling needs work, though...

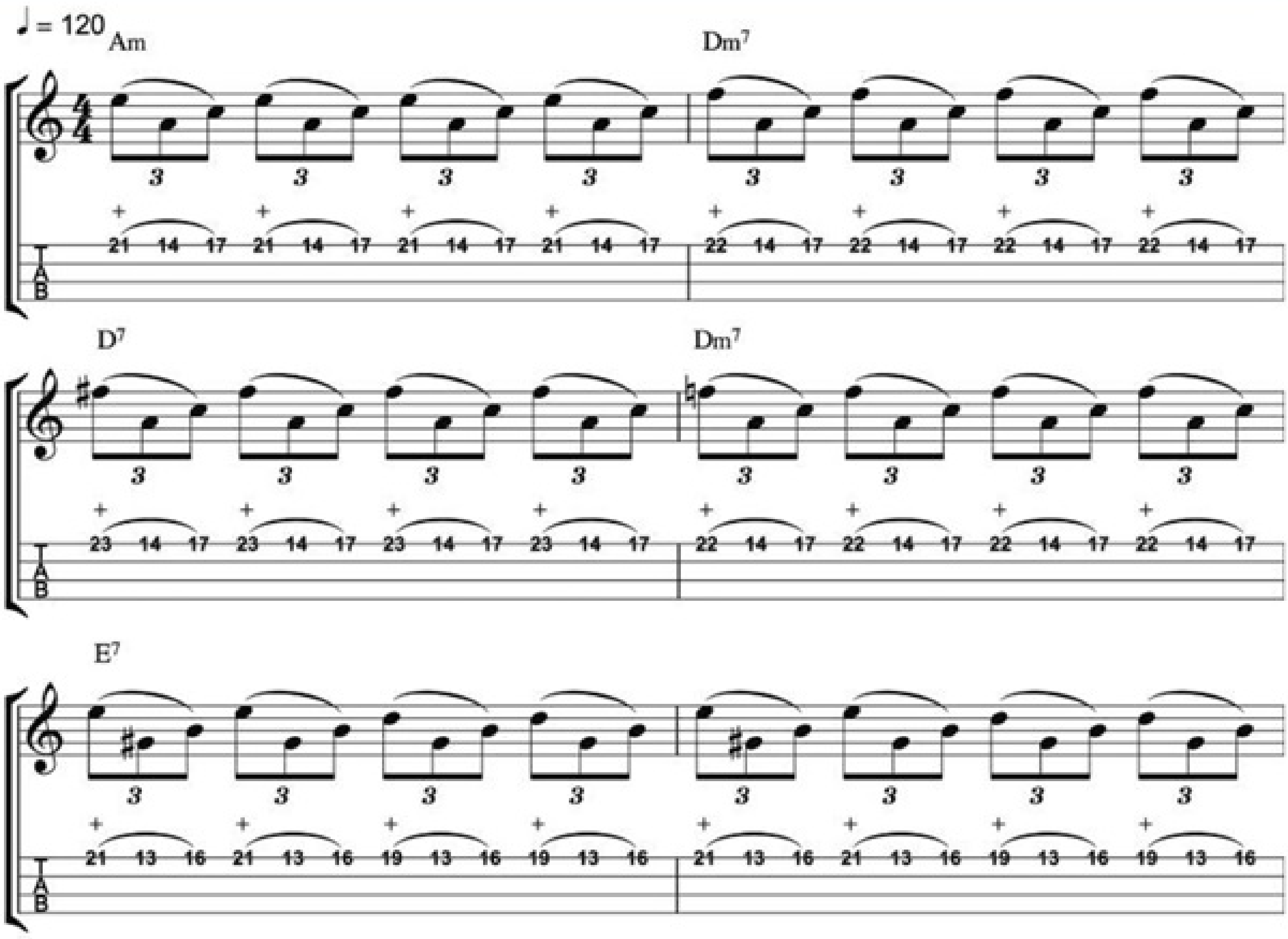
Example 3

By representing each chord with a healthy mix of chord tones, the overall quality of each one should be clearly audible. This concept can of course be expanded to include additional chord tones such as sevenths and ninths, and the next few examples will explore this.

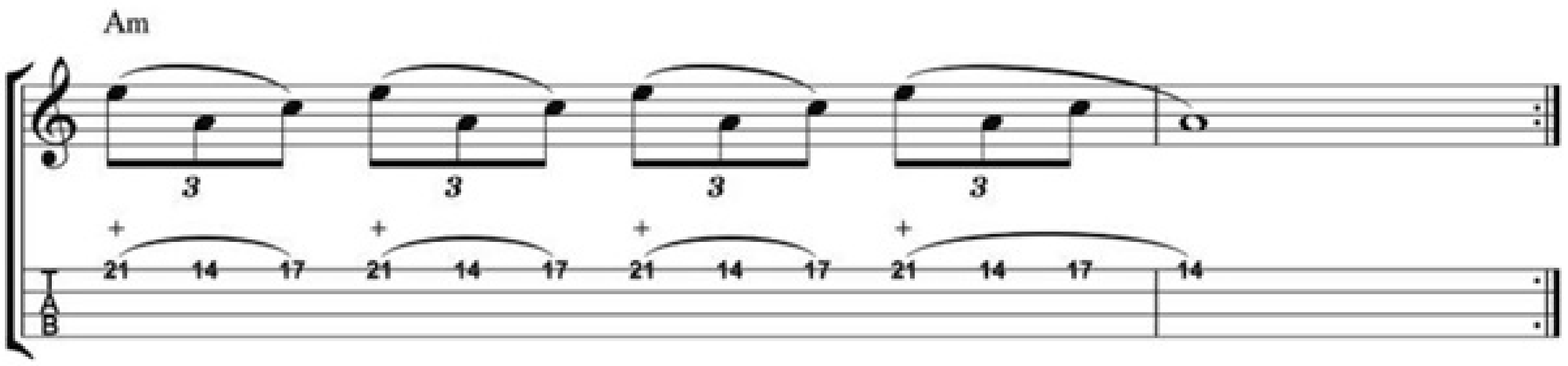


Example 4

This example clearly outlines a series of chords, which have been indicated above the notation. The A minor chord is outlined with all three chord tones – A, C and E. In the second bar the E moves up to an F, meaning that the minor third (F), fifth (A) and seventh (C) of the Dm7 chord are used. In the following bar, the F becomes an F#, again meaning that the third, fifth and seventh of the D7 chord are played. The chord then changes to E7 and all of the required chord tones are used: the fretting hand plays G# (the major third) and B (fifth) while the picking hand alternates between tapped Es and Ds (the seventh). As you'll hear, the minimal melodic movement from chord to chord is extremely effective. In a way this is similar to voice leading in chord progressions. Note that this exercise has been written in treble clef as it takes place in the upper register of the instrument.

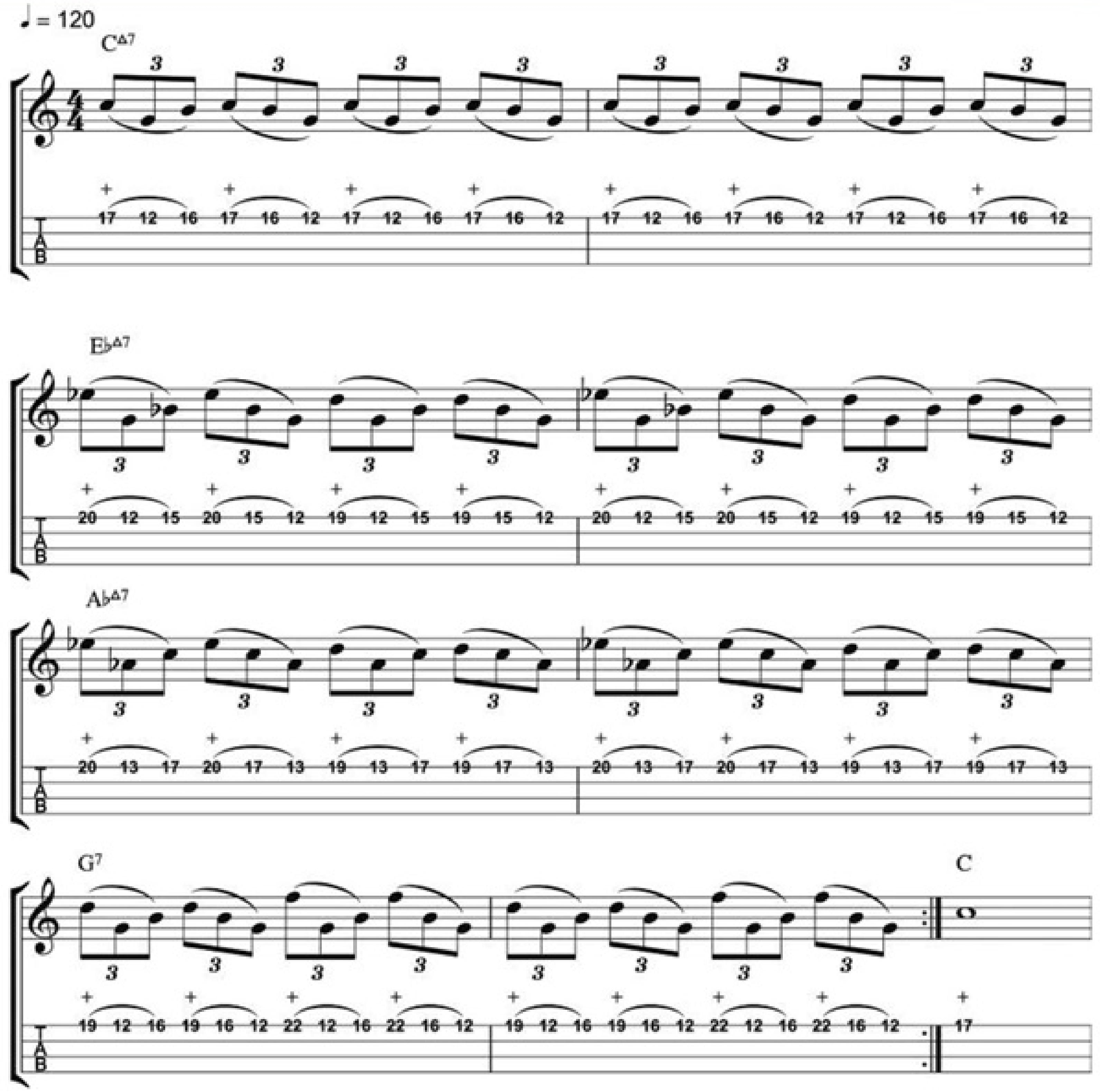


"THE TECHNIQUE HINGES ON A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF CHORD TONES"



Example 5

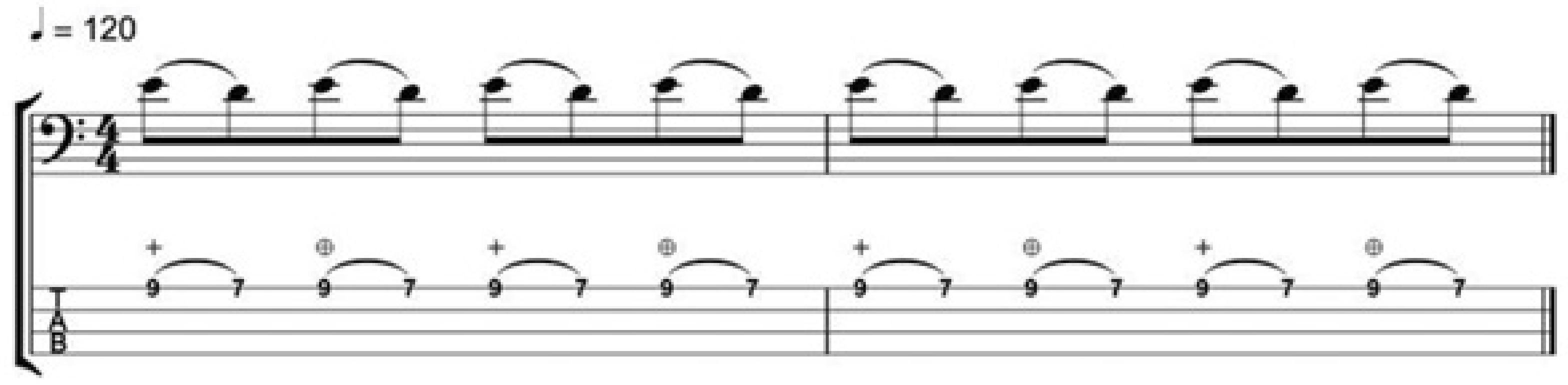
Here's a chord sequence that uses several major seventh chords: Cmaj7, Ebmaj7, Abmaj7 followed by G7. For each one, chord tones are used to clearly outline each chord.



By now you should have an understanding of the linear tapping technique, and I imagine that you're beginning to see the potential that it has (for good as well as evil!). Hopefully you can also see that success with the technique hinges on a solid understanding of chord tones, arpeggios and scales – at the very least, tapping is an alternative way of practising these essential harmonic elements.

We're now going to start looking at some common variations on the linear tapping technique, beginning with something that Billy Sheehan is known for: rapid-fire trills. This is where we very rapidly trill between two notes, using both the picking hand and fretting hand to hammer-on and pull-off. If you want to hear this in action, check out the intro of the classic Mr. Big tune 'Addicted To That Rush'.

Example 6



In our final example we will continuously alternate between two notes on the G string – the D and E. To play this, the first finger of the fretting hand should be fretting the D at the seventh fret of the G string before you start. The picking hand then taps the E above it and pulls off to sound the D. Immediately after this, the third finger of the fretting hand taps the E and pulls off to sound the D again. This repeating motion between the two hands can be played at very rapid speeds with little effort - you should not find it difficult to increase the speed to the point where you are playing a very fast flurry of notes.

Next month's instalment will continue to look at these techniques and we'll move on to applying them to some new melodic material. As ever, if you have any questions about this column, I'm more than happy to help and I can be reached via the magazine. Until next month...

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LOW END OF LOVE

Welcome to our new column in which Joe Shooman celebrates the most iconic bass guitars. This month: the gorgeous Aria Pro II

Metallica's Cliff Burton, Jack Bruce and John Taylor of Duran Duran aren't the likeliest of bedfellows – but they all shared a love for the Aria Pro II.

The Japan-based company began in 1956 under the name of Arai – named after founder Shiro Ari – initially manufacturing acoustic guitars with Guyatone. Issues with bindings, glues and wood splits led to a replacement manufacturing contract with the Matsumoku factory, a subsidiary of Singer Sewing Machines, in 1964. The company rebranded as Aria in 1966 and really started killing it when a certain design engineer came onboard. Nobuaki Hayashi is his name, and his pseudonym H. Noble is seen on much of his work.

In 1975 the Aria Pro II brand came out. Aria's move into creating its own lines was partly a response to a crackdown on copycat instruments that Aria, and many others, had been producing.

Getty

John Taylor of Duran Duran: an early Aria adopter

Artin Porter

Lieutenant Dave Clarke of Uncle Funk

Graeme Ross

The SB used on certain Arias stood for Super Bass – and later, Super Balanced. The Pro II range covers many basses, from the entry-level bolt-on TSB right through to the 2013 signature Cliff Burton signature, a replica of the bass he played towards the end of his tragically short life. It features a heel-less seven-ply maple and walnut neck, an alder body and hand-crafted gold-plated brass tuners. Expect to pay up to four grand for this beast. And beasts they can be – the 1980s SB900 was approaching 20 pounds in weight.

The golden era of the instrument ended with the Matsumoku factory's closure in 1987, although Aria continue to make excellent instruments, some in Korea. Recent reissues keep standards high, but it's the classic age that many players are still drawn to.

"If the SB1000 is King of the Matsumoku Arias, then the SB900 is undoubtedly queen," says Aria fanatic Amergin Alba. "As if in perfect balance with the active single-pickup SB1000, with its radical preamp and distinctive honk, the SB900 is passive, twin-pickup, and with a huge range of control. It can be thick and warm, or gritty and textured on tap. It's a child of the 80s, but it has the 70s written all over it."

Lars Hørning of Danish groove metallers Diretone is a current endorsee. "I love playing the SB1000 CB because it has a great feel, great sound, neck through body construction, simple and classic look," he says. "Plus, it's top-of-the-line craftsmanship."

Steve Clark plays in party band Hustler, and owns a plethora of Aria basses including the SB1000 John Taylor signature model. "It's almost the same as the original SB1000, aside from the tapered neck, and black Gotoh hardware. It's a stunning instrument to play," he says. "I've also got a SB700 which is the passive version of the SB1000, and the rare original Black'N'Gold I from 1983. I always come back to the Arias!"

Thanks to Aria Pro II enthusiasts Ben Post, Martin Wisbey, Steve Clark, Neil Thomas, Lars Horning, Robert Dean Pelham Jr, Thiyo Baltazar, Guido Esteban, Michael Chiusano, Trevor Raggatt, Nick Smith, Dave Clarke, Stacey Cline and Graham Ross for their help.

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